Beyond text?

Critical practices and sensory anthropology

Edited by

Rupert Cox, Andrew Irving and Christopher Wright

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Introduction: the sense of the senses

Rupert Cox, Andrew Irving and Christopher Wright

Encounter

The idea of the *encounter* is a central leitmotif in both anthropology and art. The discipline of anthropology was largely founded upon the ethnographic encounter with alterity – whether through face-to-face encounters in the field or facilitated by material artifacts and textual accounts – through which social, cultural and moral differences are made explicit, negotiated and represented. The two archetypal spaces of fieldwork in which difference was encountered, the museum and the monograph, combined to establish, even reify, a particular kind of anthropological subject in the social imaginary. Encounters with otherness have been equally foundational to the production, practices and reception of art. Works of art, including images, films, objects and performances, have long served to bring different social worlds, aesthetic practices and audiences into contact or conflict with each other. It is an encounter that produces hybrid, mimetic and appropriated forms and which opens spaces for discussion and interpretation, thereby creating an uneasy alliance between art, language and theory that is often in tension and never settled. In all these contexts, the encounter makes possible a kind of defamiliarisation or *ostranenie-in-action*: a dialogue with other ways of thinking and being, wrapped in global power and politics, whereby the process of making strange is already at work. However, encounters with difference do have the capacity not only to defamiliarise and unsettle the ordinary but also vice versa, that is, to domesticate unknown, exotic and alien cultural artifacts by bringing them into the realm of common knowledge, theory and familiar moral spaces.

Encounters with alterity are rooted in, express and test out, the relationship between sensory perception, knowledge and interpretation, thereby encapsulating a key question in *Beyond Text?* concerning the relationship between anthropological understandings of the world and different modes of aesthetic practice and production. It is also a question about the subject-hood and status of the objects of artistic or anthropological inquiry, about the ways in which images, sounds and objects combine

to affect us and transform our knowledge of ourselves and others, about how art plays upon our nervous systems but is frequently understood through language, text and reading as the privileged means of analysis and representation. *Beyond Text?* advocates that there are still new, critical insights to be made through text and in writing culture and aesthetics into anthropological theory but at the same time argues that there are other modes of representation – including the combinations of visual, aural and material productions assembled in this book and the accompanying DVD – that facilitate different kinds of theoretical, sensory and interpretative encounter and which utilise non-linguistic and non-textual knowledge. As neurology has long shown, not all thought processes take place in language: various non-linguistic and non-symbolic modes of thinking and being operate beyond or at the threshold of language. However, using or accessing such knowledge in practical research contexts or in pursuit of a better understanding or representation of the social lives of other human beings is far from straightforward. It is the kind of knowledge that Dwight Conquergood claims 'is anchored in practice and circulated within a performance community, but is ephemeral' and as such is different from the propositional or declarative knowledge that 'is anchored in paradigm and secured in print' (2002: 145).

Experiment

There are multiple ways that encounters with otherness and alterity can be approached or characterised. One way is through experimentation, including experimental methods, new modes of writing and alternative exhibition-making. In the realm of ethnographic writing, James Clifford and George Marcus's watershed volume *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (1986) famously made the case for new literary styles of ethnographic composition that were cognisant about, and set against a political background of, post-colonial representation, the epistemological limits of language and the canonical problematic of 'voice'. The problem of writing and representing culture, which centred on the issue of *for whom* and *to whom* the anthropologist is speaking (and from what position the anthropologist claimed the authority to do so), also served to reinforce the idea of *text* as the primary means and testing grounds for the discipline. Marcus himself regrets that the aesthetic implications of *Writing Culture* were not taken up by anthropologists, and that its impact has instead largely focused attention on issues of textual and ethnographic authority (see Calzadilla and Marcus 2006). Marcus and theatre practitioner Fernando Calzadilla attempted to realise anthropology's theoretical, aesthetic and sensory concerns in the field by creating a multisensorial structure in a Venezuelan marketplace consisting of pipes, plastic sheets, asphalt, onion sacks and carrier bags in collaboration with the market's workers (Calzadilla and Marcus 2006). The aim was to emphasise, through the everyday materials of the market, the material affects and occasional violence of daily market life under the looming presence of the Venezuelan oil industry. Such an approach

gives an example of how the theoretical, textual and documentary imperative found in anthropological analysis might productively be transformed into fieldwork techniques and ethnographically grounded modes of representation that can communicate the properties of people's everyday lived experiences as they emerge in action.

Such approaches follow in the pioneering footsteps of Victor Turner's attempts to bring ethnography to life through performance and drama. Turner was particularly interested in how corporeal experience and emotion could be evoked through the aesthetics of the performing body, and explicitly recognised that ethnography – whether understood in terms of fieldwork practice or as a mode of dissemination and representation – is a particular type of performative and collaborative activity that can be used to research and represent the complexity and diversity of human experience. Turner's students would not only read ethnographies but enact and perform them in order that the social life and rituals of other places could be brought to life and partially experienced, if not understood, in their nervous systems and bodies. Here, Turner's emphasis on *experience* recalls the word's close etymological link with *experiment* insofar as both terms share the same root, where *ex* signifies 'out of', while *peira* means 'attempt, trial, test'. Conceptualised and enacted as such, experience retains the character of a testing-out in the face of the unknown and the unfamiliar. Consequently, rather than being concerned primarily with the past or present, experience is often explicitly oriented towards the future, implying a type of movement towards something not yet known or experienced, rather than something that has already happened, already been defined and interpreted. Experience, when used in this sense of a testing-out or experiment *vis-à-vis* something whose outcome is undetermined, sets up the possibility for establishing new existential perspectives and understandings.

Incorporating Turner's ideas and techniques alongside those used by creative artists (Irving 2007; Schneider and Wright 2006, 2010) and those utilised by other disciplinary approaches (Crapanzano 2005), including that of applied drama (Thompson 2005), auditory journeys (Cox 2008), collaborative ethnofiction (Sjöberg 2008) and art therapy (Hogan and Pink 2010), may help develop new, practical approaches to knowing, theorising and representing fundamental questions about social life and human experience. The commitment to practice not only generates empirical data for investigation and textual analysis but helps ensure that the debate is not conducted at levels of theoretical abstraction remote from the lives and concerns of the anthropological subjects that are represented.

If this places anthropology more squarely in the experimental or subjunctive mode, then it is telling that Marcus's own presentation at the 'Beyond Text?' conference in 2007 argued that the key to the whole conference was the question mark in the title, and it is in this exploratory and open-ended spirit that we have assembled this collection of textual, visual and audio works. The idea of experimenting with non-textual productions and ethnographic exhibition-making builds upon the disciplinary concerns about the politics and power of representation but is also influenced by the ideas and practices of science. This is the idea of museum, gallery or website as a

laboratory site where various elements are brought into relation with each other in a transformative process capable of generating new phenomena and new knowledge (Basu and Macdonald 2007). Ethnographic productions, exhibitions and other forms of representation, rather than fixing or reifying cultural difference, become 'experiments in meaning making' with 'no sure idea of what the results may be' (Basu and Macdonald 2007: 1–2). Or, as Ingold suggests:

> Every text, story or trip, in short, is a journey made rather than an object found. And although with each journey one may cover the same ground, each is nevertheless an original movement. There is no fixed template or specification that underwrites them all. (Ingold 2007b: 16)

The challenge in attempting to go 'beyond text' is not simply to explore the modes of experimental practice, methodology and representation that are made possible through audio and visual technology but to stay mindful of the question of how 'voice' might be politically and morally articulated or positioned in forms beyond the written word. The creation of such experimental ethnographic contexts and media spaces explicitly links the realms of sensory perception, aesthetic appreciation and the operation of technology in describing cultural otherness, and can be seen as part of a history of modernity that Michael Taussig describes in his work *Mimesis and Alterity* (1993). Taussig draws on the works of James Frazer and Walter Benjamin to argue for the magical power of the copy, as manufactured through technologies such as photography and the gramophone, to create a sensuous sense of contact with what has been copied. The representational force of the copy is derived from this stickiness of the referent as an affective presence of the original.

Power of images/agency of objects

The possibility of using images, objects and sounds to think with anthropologically, as well as for ethnographic representation, intersects with theories in visual studies about the 'power of images' and in material culture studies about the 'agency of objects'. These theories have reinforced attempts within visual anthropology to recognise the ethnographic value of artistic works and practices and have also highlighted the capacity of anthropological film-making and exhibition-making to overcome the descriptive limits of text in evoking qualities of presence and feeling. These qualities evoke the idea of *aesthesis* in its original meaning of sensory perception and bodily feeling. The embodied dimension of the aesthetic forms the basis of what Eagleton (1990) describes as 'deep subjectivity': a nervous and sometimes dangerous area of activity that raises important epistemological questions for anthropology and its basis in the face-to-face encounter and extended participant observation in the field. The subsequent theorisation and translation into text of the corporeal and aesthetic experience in the field recalls the emphasis Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714–62) placed on the rational interpretation of the senses and his influential definition of

aesthetics as the 'science of the senses'. Baumgarten's attempt to rationalise the senses was critiqued in subsequent years – not least by Tolstoy, who saw Baumgarten's model as counterproductive to the making and understanding of art; however, anthropology continues to struggle to find ways of representing and theorising the sensuous encounter in the field. The in-depth engagement with and participation in other people's social, sensory, aesthetic and political lives, combined with the systematic application of method and theory, we are told, differentiates anthropology from other disciplines, and from other forms of encounter, such as journalism or travel. Sensory and aesthetic impressions, especially in the initial few weeks of fieldwork, when they are perhaps the strongest, are mostly dismissed as irrelevant as the anthropologist gains greater in-depth knowledge and understanding. What might be gained, we must ask, in taking seriously the ephemeral and fleeting senses that we encounter in the field but that do not achieve the requisite stability to enter into language, let alone theoretical interpretation? Can these sense impressions be ascribed an equal but different status to other forms of knowing and, if so, what epistemological and ontological underpinnings should we draw upon to differentiate the modes of knowing and understanding that emerge, and how might these be represented? Of course, the anthropological method of combining extended periods of co-dwelling with rational inquiry and textual representation does not guarantee understanding and sometimes reveals deep-seated discrepancies. At times, the disparity reaches the point of an incommensurable difference and radical otherness that challenges not only anthropology's epistemological grounding but its whole *raison d'être*. Thus, at the end of *Triste Tropiques* (1955), Lévi-Strauss, who set out in pursuit of Rousseau's dream of finding a people untainted by modernity, finds the Brazilian Indians he encounters too different to enable effective communication and mutual understanding. Indeed, the failure of Lévi-Strauss's quest is telling, for certain aspects of human experience are destined to remain impervious to linguistic kinds of representation no matter how thick the textual description or how deep the textual analysis.

The case for using non-textual media in anthropological, art-based or aesthetic productions and representations is sometimes accompanied by a naïve posture or antagonism towards language. Janet Wolff's concluding chapter for *Beyond Text?* identifies the academic trends behind these aesthetic attitudes as: the turn to 'affect', the (re)turn to phenomenology (and post-phenomenology), actor-network theory in sociology and science studies, theories of the post-human (human/animal, human/nature, human/technology), theories of materiality, emphasis on the agency of objects, the turn to neuroscience in the humanities and social sciences, and the insistence on 'presence' as an unmediated encounter. Wolff goes on to make the case for a certain caution in relation to tendencies to abandon too hastily the solidities of cultural and sociological theory'. The theoretical turns that Wolff describes suggest that while there may be opportunities for opening up and engaging with the senses in anthropological inquiry, there are dangers in the diminishment or loss of a critical attitude and social perspective.

What is at stake here is the acuity of insight into social mores and national political values evident in Catherine Russell's chapter and her critical reading of the Japanese film and television genre of 'home drama' about 'ordinary people' (Chapter 13). She construes this work of interpretation not as a simple reading or semiology of images but 'as a sensory mode of ethnography, which is nevertheless virtual – a phantasmagoria of cultural practices and feelings'. Russell's chapter points towards a relationship between writing, reading and the senses that involves a vital, lively, sensory intelligence. It is a mode of apprehension that Paul Carter's Chapter 6 describes in terms of the Phaedric dialogue between Plato and Socrates, where the writing on the wall of the Delphic injunction – 'know thyself' – reveals not the *logos* of the Word as a 'language of reason' but an 'older role' where 'logos and mythos, language and mouthing or story-telling, have not been torn apart. Logos retains its spiritual – its dynamic – power.' For Carter, this power of logos is a sensual force that allows us to recognise in the 'event of the thing' (the sound of words) and the thing itself, an excessiveness, ambiguity and luminosity of meaning. It moves us from a visual apprehension of writing to an auditory one, which has implications for 'anthropologists who fail to read in writing the limits of what can be said' and which the contributors to Part II of *Beyond Text?*, 'Sound', address in various ways. Their works support Carter's argument for reading beyond semantic meaning and paying attention to what may be listened to in 'the time of the speeches, the auditory attachments that counterpoint and punctuate them'.

This is a call for a sensibility that acknowledges the poetic dimensions of evocation over representation and recalls anthropological experiments in ethno-poetics led by Jerome Rothenberg and Dennis Tedlock in their ground-breaking journal *Alcheringa/ Ethnopoetics*. Founded in 1970, this initially self-published literary journal combined transcriptions and translations of oral and ancient poetry, original works by poets who were anthropologists and occasional recordings on a disc fitted into a sleeve inside the journal's front cover (Tedlock 1999: 157). The combination of text with audio and visual material on the DVD for *Beyond Text?* draws on the example of *Alcheringa* and likewise aims to bring together artists and anthropologists so as to explore, experiment and test the limits of text and the textual paradigm in anthropological inquiry.

Iconophobia: writing

There is historical concern in anthropology about the capacity and power of images to represent and communicate in ways that text cannot, which Lucien Castaing-Taylor describes as a kind 'iconophobia' (Castaing-Taylor 1996). At the root of this concern is the paradox of the image-versus-text relation in anthropology, where for the image to have documentary value it should, as Arnd Schneider and Christopher Wright have pointed out (2006: 185), be allowed to 'speak for itself' and inhibited as little as possible. However, the potential for multiple interpretations of the image

means that within academic circles there is invariably an attempt to constrain and direct its meaning by surrounding it with devices such as narrative structure, voice-over, subtitles, captions and explanations. It is an issue that highlights the tension between the oft-quoted claim in visual anthropology that images are 'more accessible' and the ethical and political concerns expressed by the indigenous, marginalised or threatened subjects of those images, who may wish to control that access or instead create images by and for themselves.

This book asks, and attempts to demonstrate, how this relationship between text and sound and image may be productively reconfigured in fieldwork and other contexts so as to lead to new forms of practice and representation in anthropology and beyond. This should not be taken as a romantic or defensive posture about the need for the discipline to recognise the value of artistic creations that have the presence and potential to transgress or enhance the conventions of academic text. For it is hardly sufficient to argue that non-textual media can obviate the obscurantism of specialised academic language, only to find that they have become part of another rarefied language of art appreciation. Instead, our aim is to argue that there may be critical and creative competencies at work in artistic, non-textual or media productions and show how these have the capacity to offer anthropological insights of equivalent value to the standards set by the written text. The problem of going 'beyond text' is not the literary question it might at first appear to be, and it should not be confused with existing critiques of approaches to 'culture as text' or 'discourse', nor should it be taken as a call for anthropologists to engage uncritically in experimentations with media other than writing which might result in an evaporation of the social, political or historical. In other words, *Beyond Text?* does not seek a liberation from text or from social and theoretical concerns but seeks to open a conversation about how to recognise, use and analyse those works in film, photography and sound that currently exist on the margins of the discipline. This is also a pedagogical issue. Not only are images, recordings, artworks and other media central to the teaching of anthropology, but there is often a point at which students ask if they can produce a film, performance, photographic essay or sound recording as part of a dissertation. In order to do so, they usually have to justify it in text and explain why it is necessary and what it is doing that a conventional ethnographic text could not. This orthodoxy is also widely reflected in the professional, disciplinary criteria for academic recognition and advancement; unlike with journal articles and monographs, the discipline has great difficulty in assessing non-textual media as viable forms of research and knowledge production.

Corporeal presence, art-making and social critique

A number of the epistemological, practical and representational concerns thus far discussed were raised in David MacDougall's book *The Corporeal Image* (2005). MacDougall calls for a visual anthropology that is not reliant on textual paradigms to

justify itself and refers to the capacities of media to generate 'co-presence', meaning the ability to combine image, sound, text and object to evoke sensory experience and the simultaneous presence of different sensory phenomena. MacDougall has long argued that visual anthropology should overtly try to convey impressions, experiences and understandings that resist or exist beyond spoken and textual description and explanation, while lamenting that anthropological films are too often fashioned as 'texts by other means', through, for example, an over-reliance on interviews and talking heads (MacDougall 2005). The 'Beyond Text?' conference was designed to respond to MacDougall's call for visual anthropology to develop alternative objectives and methodologies but it rapidly became evident that these questions were pertinent to many other fields of inquiry and held important implications for practice-based research across the arts and social sciences, especially with regard to the epistemological and evidential status of the material being produced. There was an astonishing, even overwhelming, response to the call for papers, which took us out of what might have been a parochial concern with visual anthropology. It offered the promise of a step away, or step beyond, simply arguing for 'more' visual material in social science products and the false choice between, on the one hand, realist, observational and documentary practice and, on the other, experimental, sensory art and practice-based phenomenological approaches to research and representation. It is a dichotomy that misconstrues the long and intricate history of the relationship between art-making and social analysis and critique, which includes art movements such as constructivism, surrealism and the social documentary movement, the idea of the document and the essay as they may be expressed through film and photography and sound, and themes of appropriation, participation, collaboration and the everyday. Arnd Schneider's opening following chapter for *Beyond Text?*, and other works by Schneider (1993, 1996, 2008), Schneider and Wright (2006, 2010, 2013) and Wright (1998), deal with many of these movements and themes, by tracing out, through examples of artworks, the possible paths of artistic practice not taken or dismissed by anthropologists. Much of the contemporary debate about this field revolves around the cautions expressed in Hal Foster's essay 'The Artist as Ethnographer?' (1995) and the possibilities inherent in Nicholas Bourriaud's notion of 'relational aesthetics' (2002, 2006).

Foster's essay critiques the appropriation of ethnographic methods as a form of political action in areas of site-specific art and argues that because artists do not always participate in an extended, in-depth ethnographic involvement over a long time – and see the site as 'readymade' for representation – 'the other' is not always properly engaged or acknowledged in the creation of the project. Participation is also central to the anthropological possibilities and pitfalls of Bourriaud's project to make the inter-relations that emerge between persons in the context of making or viewing art the basis for the specific work's aesthetic form and appreciation. As Claire Bishop (2004) has pointed out, while this project may have political potential in democratising gallery spaces and encouraging dialogues between artist and audience, it does not distinguish the particular quality of relationships activated through the work nor

differentiate them from other works of 'relational art', which could include artistic experiments in participation in German theatre during the 1920s or contemporary forms of socially and politically engaged performance art. Another critique of this notion of relational aesthetics is by Grant Kester, who rightly points out some of the contentious issues surrounding words like 'participation' and 'collaboration' in terms of the power dynamics involved with the production of artworks, and this is a key area of concern for anthropologists (Kester 2004, 2011).

Within anthropology, creating new forms of ethnographic participation and collaboration with artists or using artistic practices presents another set of challenges (Irving 2011; Schneider and Wright 2006), as with applied drama (Sjöberg 2008; Thompson 2005). Marcus's notion of the 'para-site' as a space for artists and artistic practice located beside or in the field, where relations may be identified in particular ways as flowing, entangling, severing and transforming, is part of a sustained and exciting attempt to realise an ethnography made by design, collaboration and conceptual work. Likewise, from a background in critical and literary theory, David Carroll, with his notion of para-aesthetics, argues that art often retains a capacity to open up and outline a conceptual territory that academic theories and ideas tend to follow, in the way that experimental techniques of writing, method and representation pursued by the impressionists, surrealists and situationists opened up ways of thinking that only many years later became accepted within social science (Carroll 1987).

The realm of the senses

Elsewhere in anthropology, it is within the realm of the senses rather than notions of participation, conceptual work or design that claims are made for an approach to anthropology as aesthetic production. Harvard University's Sensory Ethnography Lab, under the leadership of Lucien Castaing-Taylor, is a leading example of an approach to media production led by and directed towards a sensory engagement with the subject that plays with and against the power of the image. Castaing-Taylor's film with Ilisa Barbash (2009), *Sweetgrass* (a segment of which is presented on the DVD accompanying the present volume), about the last migration of sheep through Montana's Absaroka-Beartooth mountain range, offers a prescient example. After being roundly rejected by many anthropological film festivals, Castaing-Taylor explains his approach thus in Chapter 15 (p. 154):

> Ambiguity, or any kind of aesthetic opacity that isn't readily translatable into the limpid clarity of expository prose, is somehow lacking for anthropologists, in their quest for 'cultural meaning', which they're hell-bent on linguifying. And as often as not, out of all recognition. Clarity for me is an illusion, a product of a certain kind of cultural textology.

However, a broader and engaged audience can be found elsewhere and Castaing-Taylor showed some of the material filmed during the making of *Sweetgrass* as a

single-screen video installation at the Marion Goodman Gallery in New York alongside work by the British artist Steve McQueen, while his recent film with Véréna Paravel, *Leviathan*, found audiences in cinema and gallery spaces far beyond those that anthropology normally reaches. Similarly, Carlyle and Cox's 'sound film' installation *Air Pressure* has been exhibited to diverse public audiences in galleries and arts festivals around the world, achieving a social impact on understandings of the scientific and environmental issues that it describes which would have been difficult if not impossible to achieve through normal academic means of textual representation (see Chapter 10 of the present volume).

A different approach to Castaing-Taylor's is in evidence in the argument for multisensoriality articulated by Sarah Pink, who sees the 'future of visual anthropology' in the capacity of media systems – notably hypermedia – to provide a practical means of combining the visual, the aural and the written (Pink 2006). In so doing, the privileged and discrete position of vision in the discipline may be overturned and 'sensory ethnography' may become a means of doing an applied anthropology with relevance to the public sphere. The blurring of borders between what are sometimes still considered within anthropology as discrete media is an area that is extremely productive for anthropologists to creatively explore. The rise of so-called 'new digital cinema' (Willis 2005) and digital anthropology shows how earlier distinctions – such as those between documentary and art – have been superseded by a more fluid, digital realm. This does not mean that any medium specificity can be willingly ignored, quite the opposite, but that the blurring results in works which previously would have been consigned to the category of 'art' now fitting just as well in the category 'documentary'. This does not entail sidestepping issues of truth or ethics but reveals them as key areas of dialogue and discussion between disciplines.

The different connections made by Castaing-Taylor, Cox and Pink between sensory perception, anthropological research and representation and non-textual media reinforce the case made by David Howes, anthropologist of the senses, about how McLuhan and Ong's writings on the role of media in shaping social forms led to his own work on the historical and cross-cultural construction of the senses (Howes 1991, 2003, 2005b). Howes is critical of McLuhan's categorisation and ordering of the senses as functions of technology and instead argues for an understanding of the sensorium that is an expression of and for social forces. This has implications for correspondence theories of truth and the kinds of ethnographic claims that are made on the basis of supposed correspondences between the 'ratios' of the senses as they are constituted through social relations and how they are modelled into the design and practical application of media technologies (Howes 2003: 10). Accordingly, the media works brought together in *Beyond Text?* are presented in categories of 'Photo-essays', 'Sound' and 'Film', not because each defines a technology of the senses but rather because they provide a technology for the senses. They are designed to open up a space of anthropological encounter that is characterised not by the differences in media technology – such as between analogue and digital or monochrome and colour,

as in Patrick Sutherland's photographic essay of life in Spiti (Chapter 2) and Jennifer Deger's film about Yolngu aesthetics *Christmas with Wawa* (Chapter 17) – but rather by the critical and phenomenological insights offered by thinking with and through images, objects and sounds. The sensory faculties of looking, listening and feeling that are activated by these media sometimes flow separately and at other times mix and merge together in ways that transform our perception, experience and understanding of the world. In other words, they are important, necessary and alternative means of anthropological knowledge and analysis, although they may require different critical faculties from those involved when assessing the virtues of ethnographic texts.

What may be required from anthropological approaches to using and making film that is different from the critical faculties of working with texts is a kind of active looking, or an attention to various acts of looking that some practitioners have called an 'intercultural regard' (Deger 2006: 223). It is a kind of looking which may address the problem identified by a Yolngu film-maker Bangana in Deger's work, that:

> You guys [*balanda* (white or non-Aboriginal) anthropologists] keep looking, looking, looking but you just don't see. (In Deger 2006: 221)

The engagement with active looking has implications for both practitioners and their audiences. For example, Deger argues that when watching some of the films made by the Yolngu community she has worked with in Australia, *balanda* audiences must 'surrender the impulse to know and thereby master the "world as picture" and grasp something crucial about seeing from a Yolngu point of view' (Deger 2006: 223). Films made by the Yolngu, and facilitated by Deger, are about the types of experiential knowledge that can be provided by and through film, whereby the image cannot be subsumed by words or textual explanation. Deger's work for *Beyond Text?* explores this kind of intercultural looking, the outcome of which she describes as a 'film with Yolngu aesthetics, rather than a documentary about them' (Chapter 17, p. 164).

The work of film-makers presented in this volume ranges from the more observational style of Castaing-Taylor and Barbash, to the episodic montage of Silva, and the textural film-making of Greenhalgh. Castaing-Taylor and Barbash's film *Sweetgrass* follows Montana sheepherders on what may be one of their last transhumance journeys through the mountains. Their kind of observational film-making, with its long shots and minimal camera movements, is one that 'privileges the sensory' and 'refuses to abstract from the particular' and concerns the creation of a particular kind of inter-subjective space, where anthropological knowledge can emerge (Grimshaw and Ravetz 2010: 135). This is similar to arguments made by Laura Marks, that film enables a visceral opening out towards difference (Marks 2000: 19), and by Grimshaw and Ravetz that:

> observational cinema, contrary to much critical opinion, is not then about creating an accurate transcription of the world. Instead it hinges upon connection, expressed in an almost intangible, empathic moment … the distinctive techniques and aesthetic of

> observational filmmaking no longer appear as evidence of a simple-minded scientism or old-fashioned ethnographic realism. Instead they can be appraised as constitutive of a reflexive praxis, a way of *doing* anthropology that has the potential to creatively fuse the object and medium of enquiry. (Grimshaw and Ravetz 2010: 136, original emphasis)

This is no longer a matter of arguments about transcribing reality, but about achieving a certain kind of empathy, and indeed the convergence between new observational work and certain kinds of artistic endeavour commented on by film-maker Hito Steyerl suggest that a form of 'documentary uncertainty' is a necessary element of all exploration of social realities through film (Steyerl 2007). Jeff Daniel Silva's film *Balkan Rhapsodies* (Chapter 14) consists of a montage of seventy-eight small film fragments that combine to form a larger view of life during and after the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and play on this notion of documentary uncertainty. Functioning individually as micro films, the cumulative effect is one that allows a broad range of narratives to be drawn out. Cathy Greenhalgh's film *Cottonopolis* (Chapter 16) makes use of observational techniques in pursuing the materiality of cotton production across several continents, but, like Silva's, draws out analogies between the film form and the subject matter. *Balkan Rhapsodies* suggests the uncertainty of a single overarching view of events through the use of micro moments. *Cottonopolis* suggests a kind of material affinity between film and weaving. Steven Feld and Virginia Ryan, in their film collaboration *The Castaways Project* (Chapter 9), question the status of film as 'documentation' through representing various aspects of their material collaboration on a project that connects the slave trade in West Africa with more contemporary forms of economic exploitation. Taken together, these filmic experiments argue that anthropologists need to think more attentively and directly about looking and perception, about how people *engage* with the works produced, as well as how they are crafted. One useful example of a kind of observational empathy at work, and one that also demonstrates the convergence of art practices with ethnography, is a film by Ben Rivers called *Two Years at Sea*, a deeply ethnographic and intimate portrait of the life of a solitary recluse in Scotland shot on sixteen-millimetre black-and-white film (Rivers 2011). The film pays particular attention to the grain and textures of its protagonist's life and demonstrates the kind of productive convergences that are possible between visual anthropology and film-making more broadly. The radical nature of this redefinition of observational film-making is in the questions it poses for existing models of the generation and representation of anthropological knowledge.

In the same way that the film works assembled in *Beyond Text?* explore critical practices of perception through modes of looking and media creation, the sound works on the DVD are examples of the anthropological insights that may be had in recognising what Paul Carter in Chapter 6 calls 'the erotic ear', one that is open to the sense of background 'noise', showing that the sensation of listening is always a 'listening in, of overhearing and being overheard' (p. 96). It is this that makes the encounter theatrical and choreographic, not symbolic, and as such the sound works described in Part II all use recording practice to try to make sense of the sensory

excess that is normally eliminated from an exchange when it is translated into or analysed through text. The perceptual differences that are at stake here Jean-Luc Nancy identifies as between hearing as the perception of sound as resonant space and the active listening to the *logos* of sound. As he puts it:

> perhaps it is necessary that sense not be content to make sense (or to be logos) but that it wants also to resound. (Nancy 2007: 6)

The invitation to listen links the sound works presented in Part II, which describe a variety of scenes of sonic relations between bodies, living matter and the environment. John Wynne and Tim Wainwright's video portrait of patients on a heart and lung transplant ward in Harefield Hospital, London, reveals the 'curious mixture of sensory deprivation and sensory overload' (Chapter 7). John Levack Drever's study of the 'auditory culture of crowds' in Hong Kong questions the sense we may make of language when it is absorbed into the sonic backdrop of competing urban sounds (Chapter 8). Steven Feld and Virginia Ryan's collaboration is a meditation on the forced movements, departures and returns of people and things as part of the slave trade and its legacy, evoked through a linked composition of the sonic materials found along the space of the Ghanaian shoreline at Accra, at Pram Pram, Jamestown, Labadi, Anomabo and Korlegonno (Chapter 9). Angus Carlyle and Rupert Cox's 'sound film' also deals with numbers, repetition and economies of scale in a 'sound film' portrait of the conflict between the resonant life of a farm and the cacophonies of the airport that surrounds it in Narita, Japan (Chapter 10). Similarly, Peter Cusack's poetic reverie about the human and environmental legacies of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster is played out resonantly at a multi-species level as well as through the logos of voice and song (Chapter 11). Finally, Louise K. Wilson's sound installation explores the technical machinery deployed by sound recordists and submariners for overhearing and mishearing the bio-aquatic conversations of the Plymouth Sound on England's south coast (Chapter 12). Taken together, all these works demonstrate the insights that may be revealed through the critical application of perception, something that Steven Feld has long argued for in stating that 'Until the sound recorder is presented and taught as a technology of creative and analytic mediation, which requires craft and editing and articulation just like writing, little will happen of an interesting sort in the anthropology of sound' (see Feld and Brenneis 2004: 471).

Notwithstanding the critical-creative competencies evident in the works we have assembled here, it is important to acknowledge that there are inherent risks when attempting to create multisensory ethnographies that include what Carter describes as a return to the desire to mimic the other and to 'stage a confrontation with the Real' through greater intimacy but in so doing to subtly inscribe into them 'the face of Death' (Chapter 6, p. 93). However mimetic the device, there is an assumption of translatability and a 'normalisation of communication'. More critical still is the perceived risk that the technological specificity of media such as film, photography and sound will result in the conflation of sensory perception with what the specific

technology makes available to us; so, for example, we end up confusing the act of seeing with what the camera makes visible in ways that reduce our understanding of seeing to looking at images. This is the position staked out by the anthropologist Tim Ingold, who, in a series of phenomenological and ecologically inspired writings about perception and the environment (1993, 2000), argues against a representational theory of knowledge about the senses (2011). Against the representation of 'virtual worlds of sense' by way of their slicing up into 'scapes' and pathways, Ingold proposes that practices of walking and drawing may offer an immersive understanding of how 'every living being is a particular nexus of growth and development within a field of relations' (2011: 314–315).

Beyond Text? – with the emphasis firmly on the question mark – offers an alternative stance towards the capacity of non-textual media as tools for ethnographic research and representation, and seeks to put this into practice by way of the accompanying DVD. In the process of creating the works on the DVD there was a working through of ideas – which Paul Carter calls 'material thinking' (2004) – which is not simply about the operation of the technologies in question, and thus may avoid the determinist trap that Ingold warns of, whereby the mechanical means of production and the representational artifact are confused with the act of perception itself. The assumption that technologies of visual, sound and object production constitute forms of analysis and description in their own right (alongside their adroit co-option or 'appropriation' by indigenous and marginalised peoples) has contributed to the idea of media as theoretical 'objects of study', rather than as practical means of doing anthropology.

As such, *Beyond Text?* argues for an experimental, practice-based approach and explores the sensory perception and knowledge of the world that are made possible through the use and reception of different media practices and technologies. Our proposal is that the understanding reached by this approach is not necessarily the same as that which is arrived at when the primary mode of documentation and representation is the written text. Nor is this understanding simply a function of the technology or media in question, but also involves the coming together and participatory immersion of the anthropologist or artist practitioner with the subject through their use of media. In this vein, Christopher Pinney productively suggests a model of the ethnographer as akin to a negative exposed during fieldwork (Pinney 1995). There are various ways of describing this immersion; for example, in ethnographic film-making, Jean Rouch famously referred to it as a state of 'cine-trance' (see Rouch and Yakir 1978). This immersive and integrative process – which centres on the relationship between sensory practices and the social and cultural environment which is being represented – is important to articulate, as it addresses the subtle human and technological dynamics involved in negotiating between the demands that images, objects and sounds make of us in their recording and representation, what anthropologists and artists want from them and the responsibilities they place upon us to actively engage with the world. It also highlights the critical competences necessary in accounting for and ideally including within the representation the political and

ethical dimensions of the collaboration. Considering the analytical and multisensory properties of different media in these terms brings anthropology into a constructive dialogue with cultural domains linked to visual, sound and material culture studies, and extends existing scholarship in the anthropology of the senses and visual anthropology.

Dialogue, imagination and sensation

The notion of dialogue is but one way of conceiving the kinds of encounters that are contained in *Beyond Text?*, being, as Schneider points out and Steven Feld has demonstrated in a hugely important body of sound and film works, an anthropological trope that involves a conversational exchange about difference, where meaning is emergent, multiple, negotiated and sometimes opaque. This notion takes us back to the auditory argument about the dynamic, sensual power of logos in the Phaedric dialogue discussed by Paul Carter in Chapter 6, along with a number of other contributions that deal with the echoic and reflective properties of sounds and images, which allow us to think sensorially, through the differences between looking and seeing, hearing and listening, touching and feeling. The dialogue between people and things, flowing through matter as sense, operates at different levels: as metaphors in Steven Feld's sound piece in his collaborative installation *Castaways*, with Virginia Ryan, about the resounding waves on the slave beaches of the Ghanaian coast, and in Angus Carlyle and Rupert Cox's 'sound film' about the screaming crescendo of jets landing and taking off over the last farm remaining inside Narita airport in Tokyo, Japan. Migratory and dissipative sounds that threaten to drown out language and voice are also the subject of the sound work *Ochlophonic Study: Hong Kong*, by John Levack Drever, where the roar of the urban crowd becomes a metaphor for a profound sense of otherness and a feeling of what Canetti calls 'a marvellously luminous, viscid substance' induced by the state of 'defying words' (Canetti 2012: 23).

The subject of voice and the political implications of its positioning returns in the performed conversation that becomes a cry of protest in James Thompson's photo-essay 'Looking for Libeskind' (Chapter 5), about the attempts by the celebrated architect Daniel Libeskind to impose a housing scheme as a vision of the future onto communities uprooted by the tsunami in Sri Lanka. There are also multi-species conversations between nature and culture, for example in the interactions between the ranchers, sheep, dogs and horses in Lucien Castaing-Taylor's film *Sweetgrass*, and in the interchanges between insect and bird life and the testimonies of those still living among the debris of Chernobyl in Peter Cusack's sound piece (Chapter 11), or in the contested relationship of the sounds of bio-aquatic life and shipping traffic heard by submariners in Louise K. Wilson's sound work *Contest Behaviour* (Chapter 12). Other dialogues are oriented inwards, as personal explorations of the interior life of the body and the imagination, and have to do with those dealing with the imminence of

death caused by illness and state terror. Accordingly, the pieces by Lydia Nakashima Degarrod (Chapter 4), John Wynne and Tim Wainwright (Chapter 7), Jeff Daniel Silva (Chapter 14) and Andrew Irving (Chapter 3) are all oriented inwards, towards personal explorations of the interior life of the body and the imagination, including those that deal with the imminence of death caused by illness and state terror. As Degarrod, Wynne and Silva show, experiences of illness, disruption and displacement are accompanied by complex streams of reflection, mood, memory, reverie and imagination that are not necessarily articulatable in words or readily made public. Conventional social-scientific approaches and measures are often too static to capture or fully do justice to the fluidity of perception and lived experience – especially among those living with illness, existential uncertainty or political instability – and perhaps are best addressed by forming close working collaborations with interested persons to develop a set of mutually defined research aims and modes of description to articulate their experience.

On this issue, Vincent Crapanzano's work *Imaginative Horizons* (2004) offers a sustained critique of the empirical presuppositions of social science, including a discussion of how the complex lifeworlds brought into being by the imagination are largely understood as intangible, immaterial and irrelevant rather than empirical phenomena worthy of investigation. Crapanzano draws upon a range of literary and psychoanalytic examples to argue that people's imaginary worlds are not subjective irrelevancies but are constitutive of action, practice and bodily experience. However, Crapanzano's argument is not with objective, social-scientific inquiry or empiricism *per se* but rather with the narrow definitions and reductive accounts of what constitutes 'reality' in conventional approaches. Quoting William James's plea to reinstate 'the vague and inarticulate to its proper place in our mental life', Crapanzano suggests that to understand human behaviour it is necessary to pay closer attention to 'a dimension of experience that insofar as it resists articulation, indeed disappears with articulation, has in fact been ignored' (2004: 18). Crapanzano is largely directed towards philosophical and literary understandings of the human rather than practical fieldwork techniques and ethnographic research methods: a major challenge therefore concerns how we might combine theoretical and methodological approaches so as to practically research the complex realms of imaginative expression and experience.

Crapanzano's approach indicates why the representation of the modes of experience and expression dealt with in the chapters by Degarrod, Wynne, Silva and Irving are important and necessary. That said, these representations also raise ethical questions about artistic methods, which, as Schneider points out in Chapter 1, may bear a different weight of responsibility for artists than for anthropologists, whose accountability is tied to anthropology's historical associations with colonialism and its contemporary involvements with US military and intelligence programmes. For, unlike poetic, literary or artistic attempts to understand and represent people's lifeworlds, an anthropological approach has a duty to offer truthful and empirically justifiable accounts of people's experiences, ideally in which the subjects can

recognise themselves and their experience, which raises significant epistemological, methodological and ethnographic problems.

Lydia Nakashima Degarrod's chapter is insightful on this issue. Her collaborative research about the memories of forced migration among Chilean exiles in California involved her participants in each step of the process of creating a series of maps and videos for an installation that incorporated their feedback and concerns into the work. John Wynne's collaboration with the photographer Tim Wainwright, *Transplant*, is similarly sensitive to the dangers of voyeurism and the necessity of remaining constantly sensitive to hospital and patient demands. Andrew Irving's piece offers a different kind of encounter in order to try to engage with and represent the transient streams of inner dialogue, imagery and reverie that exist beneath the surface of urban life. Drawing on modernist writers such as Dostoyevsky and Joyce, his photo-essay (Chapter 3) and accompanying sound recordings derive from a practice-based research project, 'New York Stories', for which he recorded more than 100 interior dialogues of random strangers, which they spoke aloud as they moved around the city.

Through these dialogic encounters, our aim is to extend experiments in ethnography that have drawn upon the sensory, literary and cinematic imagination, such as the juxtaposition of image and text in the photo-essay or when adopting techniques of montage in film. To a certain extent, montage is already prefigured in lived experience. When people walk, as has often been noted, they are like film directors who stroll the streets, perceive images and mentally record their visual experiences, creating a movie in their head by way of the images they encounter, including all the various cinematic techniques of looking, editing, close-ups, long shots, flashbacks, fleeting or lingering gazes, cutting away, and the use of the different kinds of optical effects, incidental music, ambient sounds and narrative voices that are encountered in the street. Here, movement is a creative act of *poesis* that continuously generates complex dialogues and juxtapositions of sound, image, texture, taste and aroma within the flow of everyday life. It also creates many different cross-cuttings and juxtapositions of subject matter, tone, scale, rhythm, motion, sound, volume, contrast and association, akin to the classic techniques of montage, from Sergei Eisenstein to Luis Buñuel. Lived montage is generated within all the different sensory registers, including those that go beyond or challenge those that can be effectively represented in film.

The manner in which sensory data is encountered within the flow of daily life was extensively considered by Erwin Straus (1963, 1966), who documented how the body's nerve cells and sense organs register ever-changing combinations of sound and image and texture, which are rendered meaningful by the cognitive capacity to tie information together in consciousness and by the nervous system's ability to rapidly coordinate complex juxtapositions of sensory information in a manner whereby meaning is not closed off but left open for further revision and evaluation. The construction of complex montages of time and space within film are therefore not restricted to editing and cinematic technique, insofar as they are predicated upon the

human nervous system's capacity for processing and interpreting different modes of sensory data in everyday experience and phenomenological activity, thus displacing the distinction between art and life, as indicated in Gilles Deleuze's summary of 'seeing' Francis Bacon's paintings:

> The levels of sensation would really be domains of sensation that refer to the different sense organs; but precisely each level, each domain would have a way of referring to the others, independently of the represented object they have in common. Between a color, a taste, a touch, a smell, a noise, a weight, there would be an existential communication that would constitute the 'pathic' (nonrepresentative) moment of the sensation. In Bacon's bullfights, for example, we hear the noise of the beast's hooves. (Deleuze 2005: 30)

Deleuze's model of sensation returns us to understandings of aesthetics and aesthesis that are not so much concerned with art or reflection, but with life and reality as constituted through the interplay between the different sense organs. An ongoing consequence of being a body in the world is the formation and juxtapositions of sensate experience – sometimes complementing and seamlessly intertwining, on other occasions discordant or jarring – that are continuously generated through the body's sense organs and nervous activity.

Prior to the advent of film and sound recording, it would have been nonsensical to define a stage play, circus, musical concert or sports match as a 'live' performance or event because it is only through the subsequent development of technologies and media of recording and representation, such as cinema, CDs and DVDs, that such insights have become thinkable or possible. The contemporary understanding and appreciation of 'liveness' is thus partially a consequence of modern technology, illustrating how the inventions of photography, film and sound recording have produced new ways of thinking, not just in relation to cinematic and other forms of representation, but also about lived and sensory experience and how human beings encounter a world of sound, smell, image and texture. As such, analysing cinematic and other artistic techniques of representation – such as montage – provides both theoretical and practical ways of thinking about how people's lived experiences and sensory realities of the world combine and are shaped in movement and action.

Likewise, there is the related attempt to explore the question of going 'beyond text' through metaphors for thinking about and representing the world. The emphasis in *Beyond Text?* is on metaphors that draw on the material properties of walls (Carter), waves (Feld and Ryan), surfaces (Irving), windows (Russell, Carlyle and Cox) and engage with the ethnographic potential to use, combine or substitute text with other materials and media. Cathy Greenhalgh engages with *texture* in her film *Cottonopolis*. Catherine Russell explores the concept of *textuality*, while the photo-essays by Patrick Sutherland and James Thompson both use combinations of *image–text*. As such, the aim is to address the epistemological and political concerns around a negative sense of plenitude and excess of presence when these sensory elements are combined, a view

which has often required anthropologists to emphasise narrative structure, and to offer contextualisation or textualisation as constraints on meaning.

The aim of combining a book and DVD for *Beyond Text?* is to argue for an active and experimental anthropology that is open to a wider range of methods and techniques in research and representation. In some respects, this has been happening for a long time through the work of various individuals, such as the animations by the anthropologist Robert Asher (see Pasqualino and Schneider 2014; Ramey 2011) and a variety of contemporary endeavours – such as 'Ethnographic Terminalia' (http://ethnographicterminalia.org), a collective of visual anthropologists and other practitioners who have put on a series of ground-breaking exhibitions alongside American Anthropological Association conferences in the United States. These examples, and the visual and audio works discussed in this book and presented on the DVD, all argue for the productive possibilities of engaging in forms of perceptual investigation and creation and of taking the senses seriously in anthropological encounters with alterity so as to formulate sensory anthropology as a form of critical practice.

1 · Appropriations across disciplines: the future of art and anthropology collaborations[1]

Arnd Schneider

Reviewing the unparalleled period of fertile collaborations between artists and anthropologists in 1920s and '30s France, which culminated in the interdisciplinary surrealist journal *Documents*, James Clifford commented specifically on the collaboration between Georges Bataille (an editor of *Documents*) and the anthropologist Alfred Métraux, and concluded that 'French ethnography [was] on *speaking terms* with the avant-garde' (Clifford 1988: 126, my italics).

To speak about the present, or, even more ambitiously, the future of art–anthropology collaborations then seems a great leap forward. The intervening period is rich in aborted, halfway and, very occasionally, wholly successful attempts to bring the disciplines of art practice and art history into dialogue.[2] Moreover, since the early 1990s a number of writings and initiatives[3] have tried to gauge and critically assess the potentials of art–anthropology collaborations for the present. For some, such collaborations inevitably are fraught with dangers of 'artist envy' by anthropologists, and artists doubling in 'pseudo-ethnographic role[s]' (Foster 1995: 306). Others, including myself, have pointed to the critical potential in artistic projects critiquing anthropological methodologies, although 'uneasy relationships' nevertheless prevail between practitioners with different disciplinary backgrounds (Schneider 1993, 1996). Experimental situations which bring together artists and anthropologists in fact quickly reveal how tenuous and temporary any dialogue between different disciplinary traditions and practices can be.[4]

Yet there is good reason to continue to explore, negotiate and possibly fill, if only temporarily, with contemporary content those *speaking terms* which Clifford found characteristic of French anthropology and the artistic avant-garde in the 1920s and '30s. 'Content' here appears perhaps as too totalitarian or absolute a concept, but it is the dialogical situation itself (the *speaking* in Clifford's terminology) which is worth considering and aiming for, even if it stays inevitably incomplete and imperfect, and 'content' (i.e. what are the *terms* for Clifford) remains temporary and fragmentary, or just a future aspiration. With 'dialogue' I mean the conversational

situation of collaborations, conscious of the differences (in terms of economic, educational and cultural capital) which can and do exist between the participants in such collaborations. The trope of 'dialogue', of course, has been a much discussed term in anthropology (e.g. Crapanzano 2004; Maranhão 1990; Maranhão and Streck 2003; Tedlock 1983; Tedlock and Mannheim 1995; Verde 2003) and despite different emphases it is clear that it can never just mean a level position of partners, collaborators or actors, but has to account for difference. I shall return to the issue of dialogue towards the end of this chapter, but first I want to address what I regard as some central issues in current art–anthropology encounters.

Arguably, there is now a climate of 'convergence', with, on the one hand, the so-called 'ethnographic turn' of the arts and, on the other hand, the (post-)writing culture critique of fieldwork practices in anthropology, coupled with a renewed emphasis on practice (in addition to and beyond text). Within this apparent frame of convergence, or what I regard as the confluence of different disciplinary forms of experimentation, however diffuse their contours, I want to address four principal points for further reflection: iconophobia, the senses, ethics and formal experimentation.

Iconophobia

The first issue, which in fact obstructs in many anthropological quarters any dialogue with the contemporary arts and the visual more generally, concerns the continuing 'iconophobia' of mainstream anthropology. This charge was first made by Lucien Castaing-Taylor (1996), who coined the term, and further underscored in the introduction to Chris Wright's and my collection *Contemporary Art and Anthropology* (2006). 'Iconophobia' here then means the resistance to any form of representation outside or beyond written text, and the admittance of images only as illustrations, not in their own right. I shall not dwell on this point in any more detail but, to put it polemically, it is still the written monograph (or scientific article for that matter) which continues to be the dominant form of representation in anthropology, with the visual marginalised as illustration, or relegated to a sub-discipline of visual anthropology (which itself, with few exceptions, is largely based on text-based forms of narration).

The senses

In recent anthropological discussions of the senses, and of a possible anthropology 'beyond text', one of the pressing issues has been to explore how the wealth of visual and other sensorial experience in anthropological fieldwork can be recorded, interpreted and represented in other media *beyond* written texts, including beyond linear narrative, text-based models in visual anthropology (video/film and photography). Such practices would build on and go beyond the so-called

'anthropology of the senses' (Classen 2005; Howes 1991, 2004; Stoller 1989, 1997) and extend beyond its own theoretical premises of phenomenology and experience-based research (e.g. Jackson 1989), in collaborating with artists, for new forms of representation (an example straddling both traditions is Steve Feld, on whom more below).

The material of art is by definition sensory and it would be futile to compile a list of artists or artworks in this respect. Yet there are artists whose special interest in sensory research and expression are particularly relevant to anthropological concerns. An example will serve to illustrate this point.[5] Sissel Tolaas, trained in both chemistry and visual arts, for the last two decades has explored the sensory potential of smell, in both research and representation, as well as for commercial applications with the international company International Flavors & Fragrances Inc. Of all the senses, smell is perhaps the most resistant to *direct* (i.e. not second-order, derived) research by social scientists, anthropologists included. To mention just one of Tolaas's many projects, in *The Smell of Fear* (2006)[6] she distilled in a chemical process the sweat emanated by fifteen adult men in a moment of fear, and incorporated these distillations into gloss white paint, with which she painted the walls of a contemporary art gallery (see Figure 1). In the exhibition, what one might call olfactory 'spectators' move, somewhat puzzled and repulsed, along the empty walls of the 'white cube' space, only to find

1 • Sissel Tolaas's installation *Fear*, Beijing Olympics, 2008

that the apperceptive object to be beheld is not of visual pleasures but of malodorous smell. Yet the white walls of the gallery also cancel out any visual representation of the original agents of these smells, leaving the visitors alone to this one sense, and perhaps a fictive construction of the male characters behind it.

Tolaas has taken her method into many other arenas, for instance by sampling the odours on the streets of major world cities, such as London, Paris and Berlin, and distilling an array of perfumes (or fragrances) out of them, providing a rich olfactory mapping. In one of her latest projects she worked with linguists to investigate the connotations and registers of smell in different languages. In 2007, I invited the artist to the international symposium 'Art/Anthropology: Differences of Practice and Translation' (Oslo, 2007). My idea was to couple her presentation with that of Christian Sørhaug, then a social anthropology PhD student at the Museum of Cultural History, who was writing his thesis on the Warao indigenous people of Venezuela (see Sørhaug 2012). One part of his research looked at their work on urban garbage dumps. Although discussions at the symposium did not progress that far, as a thought experiment it would be fascinating to contemplate the olfactory representation of this world in a museum context; rather than getting yet another visual representation (as object image) of it, the visitor would get an entirely different sense (*sic*!) of the Waraos' and

2 • Steven Feld's *Castaways*, Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, 2007

indeed the anthropologist's experience of the garbage dump. The full epistemological implications of such new research and exhibition practices remain to be explored and there are, of course, other artists who have worked with smell and other sensory perceptions, one of them being Wolfgang Laib, who has used flower pollen and beeswax in large-scale installations.

In terms of sound, the works of Steve Feld, both as an ethnographic researcher and as a sound practitioner/musician, have been exemplary in crossing the art–anthropology divide. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to evaluate his work fully, but we can take one example. His installation work with visual artist Virginia Ryan, *Castaways* (2007) (see Chapter 9), was based on memories of the slave trade on the Ghanaian coast, which was the former Gold Coast and site of many 'slave forts'. Ryan's work incorporated flotsam and jetsam from the beach (1,000 objects in total), which were displayed as sculptural paintings or reliefs on a uniform frame size, while the complex sound recordings by Feld of the relentlessly repeating tide (*Anomabo Shoreline*) were played over large loudspeakers, and a short film piece, *Where Water Touches Land*, played out softly on a monitor in a corner (see Figure 2). While one might find this project less analytical, more atmospheric and in fact more multisensual than Tolaas's work, at the same time it evokes the historical presence of very real human experiences, that is the slave trade, albeit this is now located in the past (despite some possible current references).

Ethics

Both anthropology and art have to deal with ethics, but the reasons for this are quite different. Anthropology is marred by its not-so-distant colonial history, as well as by very recent morally and ethically 'risky' – if not totally questionable – involvement with US military operations. Historical examples for this are the wars in Vietnam, Project Camelot (to fight left-wing insurgency in Latin America) and more recently the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (which include the so-called Human Terrain System, and Minerva initiative – see the debate in the journal *Anthropology Today* from 2007 up to the present). Despite and because of these experiences, the discipline has developed ethical codes of practice, such as that published on the website of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), as well as by other professional associations, and indeed university codes of ethical practice, which are applied to all degrees that involve fieldwork, from undergraduate to postdoctoral.

Art, on the other hand, as an arguably much more diffuse and less standardised mode of knowledge production, interaction and apprehension of the world, has no such codified ethical standards as a 'discipline' or practice. Admittedly, an assertion such as 'art has no ethics' would need further discussion and research, which cannot be undertaken within the limited space of this chapter (but see Carroll 2000; Claviez 2013). Of course, art as a discipline is not value-free but rather ambiguously value-

laden, depending on the agendas and projects artists are engaged with, and throughout its history (which is the history of humanity) it has dealt with ethics in manifold ways. Contemporary art certainly has to tackle the conditions of its own specific production system (the art world, a reflection on which triggered the so-called 'institutional critique', for example in the work of artists such a Hans Haacke, with works critical of the art world's history, ideology, business and selection practices),[7] and so, too, has anthropology to deal with its academic setting. Thus, in its disciplinary self-understanding (one can call this the disciplinary ethos or even ideology), anthropology has claims to both science and ethics of a kind which art does not have. In fact, artists deliberately transgress not only moral but more specifically ethical boundaries in order to make visible or even deconstruct the historical and political contingency of such boundaries.

As one of many examples for this ethically transgressive side of art (for whatever historically contingent reasons and purposes), I take the 2004 project of Polish contemporary artist Artur Zmijewski entitled *80064*, where the artist asked a survivor of the Holocaust to have his number re-tattooed on his arm in return for a payment (see Figures 3 and 4). This was contractually agreed; however, the man was difficult

3 · Artur Zmijewski. *80064*, Foksal Gallery Foundation and Galerie Peter Kilchmann, 2004

4 · Artur Zmijewski. *80064*, Foksal Gallery Foundation and Galerie Peter Kilchmann, 2004

to convince, as he thought the new tattoo might not be 'original'. Zimjewski filmed the event, and the procedure is telling about how far art can push our ethical sensibilities. We might ask ourselves: was this only an attempt to see how far Zimjewski could go with us, who, as an audience, become by extension complicit voyeurs? Was this an attempt to see how far Zimjewski could go with the man himself? Or was this a trigger, as Zimjewski states, to reveal traumatic but long-buried memories? As he puts it:

> When I undertook this film experiment with memory, I expected that under the effect of the tattooing the 'doors of memory' would open, that there would be an eruption of remembrance of that time, a stream of images or words describing the painful past. Yet that didn't happen. But another interesting thing happened. Asked whether, while in the camp, he had felt an impulse to revolt, to protest against the way he was treated, Tarnawa replied: 'Protest? What do you mean, protest? Adapt – try and survive.'[8]

Artur Zimjewski's work invites discussion of its ethical implications. Anthropology's own chequered practices in terms of ethical standards make it difficult to carry out such a critique from a moral high ground. But the point here is to take up ethics as an important area of discussion and contestation when entering into collaborations with contemporary artists.

Formal experimentation

Another arena of encounter with the contemporary arts, experimentation, is diametrically opposed to my first point, that is, iconophobia. In fact, once 'iconophobia' is overcome, the gates of experimentation open up. One can think here of experiments which have recently shown how anthropologists, for their part, have taken up the challenge of experimenting with artistic practices. This might even include genres commonly regarded as 'traditional', such as drawing. For instance, experimentation with drawing is now being researched with a view to its multiple applications in ethnography as well as anthropological representations, such as the drawing projects across disciplines of art and anthropology in the universities of Aberdeen and Dundee (see Gunn 2007). Other examples of drawing in reflective fieldwork practices and as a research tool are anthropologist Michael Oppitz and artist Robert Powell's collaboration in Nepal, Carol Hendrickson's (2008) visual field notes from Yucatan and Michael Taussig's published field diary drawings (2011). In all cases the point is that drawing, as both visual research *and* representation, can go beyond that what can be done with *text* alone.

Further, experimentation is now also arriving at the sub-discipline of visual anthropology, where there is a new surge to experiment with the formal sides of ethnographic film, beyond the narrative, documentary forms dominating the field (see also Pasqualino and Schneider 2014; Schneider 2011b). One can think here of Laurent van Lancker's film *Surya* (2006), with its innovative and atmospheric use of still photography, and Alyssa Grossman's *In the Field* (2006) and *The Memory Archive* (2008), with their use of animation (see also Grossman and Kimball 2009).

Visual anthropology has also been reluctant to explore filmic representation beyond the single screen, while this is very common for artists who work with multimedia.[9] An example is the work of contemporary artist Ergin Cavusoglu *Tahtakale* (2004), a multiscreen installation which gives an almost ethnographic sense of the world of blackmarket currency traders in Istanbul.

Conclusion: towards dialogical art–anthropology collaborations

Any future art–anthropology collaborations will have to deal with certain parameters coming from different disciplinary backgrounds, and certain eruptive fault-lines (which for instance deal with the aforementioned arenas of iconophobia, sensory research, ethics and experimentation) around which productive but contested and sometimes conflictive dialogue will develop.

Once such collaborations are set up not only in the closed setting of a university workshop[10] but also in ethnographic fieldwork situations, they are likely to reveal both conceptual differences between artists and anthropologists and differences in

the forms of relationality that are at stake. This is because much anthropological research still consists of set fieldwork situations outside so-called 'First World' countries, where unequal relations and real differences in economic power pertain, as well as differentials in access to educational and other symbolic capital (such as the hegemonic First World education system and the equally hierarchically structured international art world). For instance, I have been involved in dialogical art projects with artists in north-west Argentina (Corrientes Province). Practised by somebody based at a metropolitan First World institution, this kind of anthropology, inevitably, is a partially hegemonic practice, where artists have substantially different access to economic resources, but also the 'global' circulation of (anthropological) knowledge, and this conditions the possibilities for finding a common understanding across disciplinary practices.[11] The reflective criticism by participating artists, for example through forms of auto-ethnography, decentres the underlying hegemonic structure of such North–South (or West–non-West) collaborations. Rather than simply appropriating knowledge forms and methodologies from the North (or West), artists develop genuinely new art forms 'from here' (Mosquera 2010: 53). At the same time, there exists of course, as in other Latin American countries, a specifically regional anthropological research tradition, marked by the complex challenges of doing research and fieldwork throughout the country's troubled economic and political history (see Guber 2002).

It is clear that there can be no normative *a priori* demands when anthropologists collaborate with artists. This is especially the case in projects where the planned collaborations are between project partners with widely different educational, cultural and economic backgrounds, which also result in different expectations for the outcome.

To return to my opening remarks, I contend that 'speaking terms' (which Clifford applied to a specific historical situation) are a useful but fragile construct which cannot be normatively presumed and have to be delicately constructed for each instance of collaboration and in each phase of the project. It is only through this procedure of mutual respect and understanding that a hermeneutic field, however tenuous and uneven, can be achieved, which might form the basis of fruitful collaborations. In this context, the insights of hermeneutic philosopher Paul Ricoeur on appropriation can be equally applied to the appropriation of methodologies across disciplines, in this case art and anthropology:

> An interpretation is not authentic unless it culminates in some form of appropriation [*Aneignung*], if by that term we understand the process by which one makes one's own [*eigen*] what was initially other or alien [*fremd*]. (Ricoeur 1981: 178; German terms in original)

Appropriation is opposed to 'distanciation' by Ricoeur, but its practice does not mean taking simple possession of the other. To the contrary, the term implies in the first instance to dispossess oneself of the narcissistic ego, in order to engender a new

self-understanding, not a mere congeniality with the other (Ricoeur 1981: 191–193).[12] 'Relinquishment is a fundamental moment of appropriation and distinguishes it from any form of "taking possession"' (Ricoeur 1981: 191).

Further, in this context of hermeneutics it is useful to think of Grant Kester's discussion of 'dialogical aesthetics' (Kester 2004: 82–123; also Kester 2011). Kester develops the concept in relation to art practices which develop, or are based on, social relations with communities and individuals, even if these relations are contingent to the project (and in most cases do not extend beyond the project's temporal frame – but see O'Neill and Doherty 2011). Some of these practices can be called community art; others have been signified as 'relational aesthetics' (Bourriaud 2002), where artists themselves instantiate social relations *as* artworks (for critical discussions of Bourriaud's notion of relational aesthetics, see Bishop 2004; also Berman and Mithlo 2011: 279, who rather suggest an aesthetics of 'relationships', which for indigenous communities would be built on kinship, community and gender relations). Kester offers an interesting discussion of the possibilities of dialogue between artists and 'communities' by thinking of the productive potential in the social relations engendered by the creation and response to artworks. He builds on and at the same time departs from Habermas's notion of the 'ideal speech act', which can remain a philosophical postulate only if it presupposes equal and 'ontologically stable' partners – a condition which is not realistic when participants in dialogue have different access to power, education and cultural capital. Kester (2004: 106) suggests, following philosopher Gemma Fiumara (1995), that any dialogue has to start not from a position of presumed equality but with an act of self-reflective listening, interrogating the 'ethics of communicative exchange'. This line of thinking comes close to Trinh T. Minh-ha's concept of 'speaking nearby', which holds that in ethnographic representations we cannot speak *about* or *for* the other (any attempts to *lend* the other a voice remain illusionary, as early textual critics assumed), but at best can speak *nearby* (Minh-ha 1994). The same insight can be applied for appropriations across disciplines. Yet inherent in any discussion of the ethics of such projects must be the recognition and self-reflection upon an unequal relationship, based on difference, between the partners in fieldwork (as recently argued by Benson and O'Neill 2006, taking inspiration from Levinas; see also Claviez 2013). I contend that it is this fundamental acknowledgement of dialogical inequality, which constitutes an uneven hermeneutic field, that can still render a productive collaboration.

Further, what Kester posits for relations between artists and their 'constructed' communities, I suggest, could also be fruitfully applied to collaborative projects between artists and anthropologists, and comes close to the hermeneutic field I have been advocating. Speaking terms, then, can be found only in a mutual recognition of difference.

Notes

1 The paper on which this chapter is based was presented at the panel 'Modalities, materialities and metamorphoses' at the Association of Social Anthropologists' conference 'Ownership and Appropriation' in Auckland, 8–12 December 2008. I thank the convenors, Patrick Laviolette and Wendy Cowling, for their invitation. Some elements of this chapter were also presented at the symposium 'Experimenting the Visual in Art and Anthropology: The Ethics of Research and Collaboration', which I convened with Ruth Woods at the University of Trondheim, 29–30 October 2008. Some elements of the conclusion have appeared in a different context in Schneider (2013).

2 I have covered these developments elsewhere: see Schneider (2011a).

3 See Schneider (1993, 1996); Foster (1995); Grimshaw and Ravetz (2005); Schneider and Wright (2006); also the international conferences 'Fieldworks: Dialogues Between Art and Anthropology at Tate Modern', London, 2003 (http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/video/fieldworks-dialogues-between-art-and-anthropology-day-1#open239813); 'Beyond Text?', Manchester, 2007; and 'Art/Anthropology: Practices of Difference and Translation', Oslo, 2007.

4 For example, the closed experimental workshop 'Connecting Art and Anthropology', Manchester, 2007, http://www.miriad.mmu.ac.uk/caa/index.php, convened by Amanda Ravetz, which brought together fourteen international artists and anthropologists.

5 The following example is also discussed in Schneider and Wright (2010: 6).

6 Presented, for example, at the 'Sensorium' exhibition, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2006; see also Jones (2006). Sometimes this work is simply titled 'Fear', as in Figure 1, from Beijing Olympics, 2008.

7 For more on the 'institutional critique' in contemporary art, see Buchloh (1999); also Bourdieu and Haacke (1995).

8 See the website http://www.we-make-money-not-art.com/archives/2008/10/bak-basis-voor-actuele-kunst.php.

9 On the rarity of the use of the multiscreen technique by anthropologists, see my discussion in Schneider (2008) (see also Basu and Macdonald 2007).

10 See note 4 on the workshop convened by Ravetz in 2007.

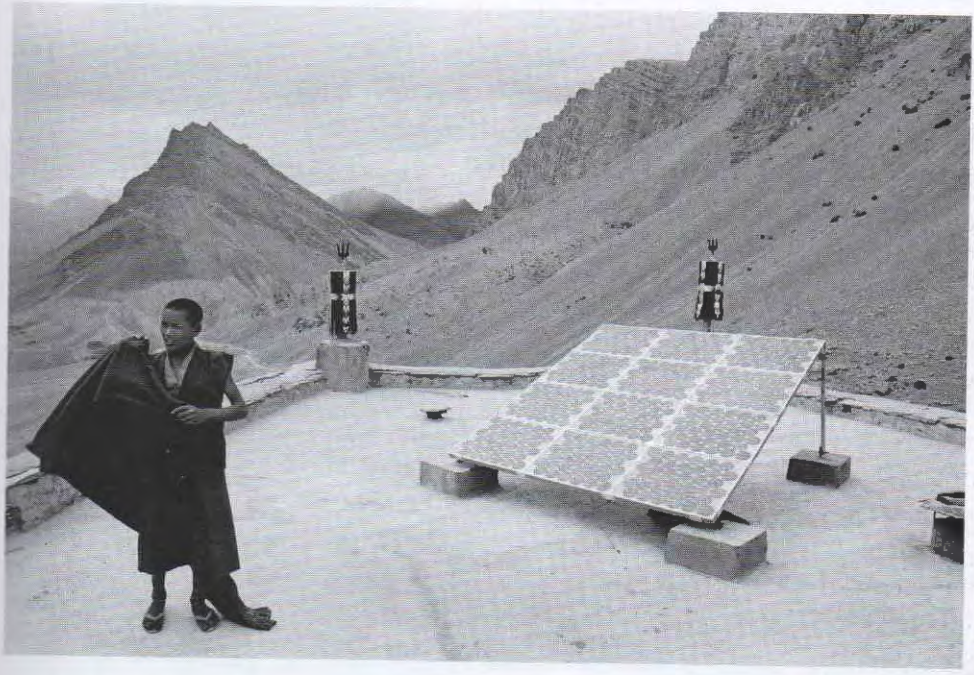
11 This example is further developed in Schneider (2013).

12 Ricoeur is inspired primarily by Gadamer's *Truth and Method* (1960).

PHOTO-ESSAYS

2 · Spiti: some notes on the practice of documentary photography

Patrick Sutherland



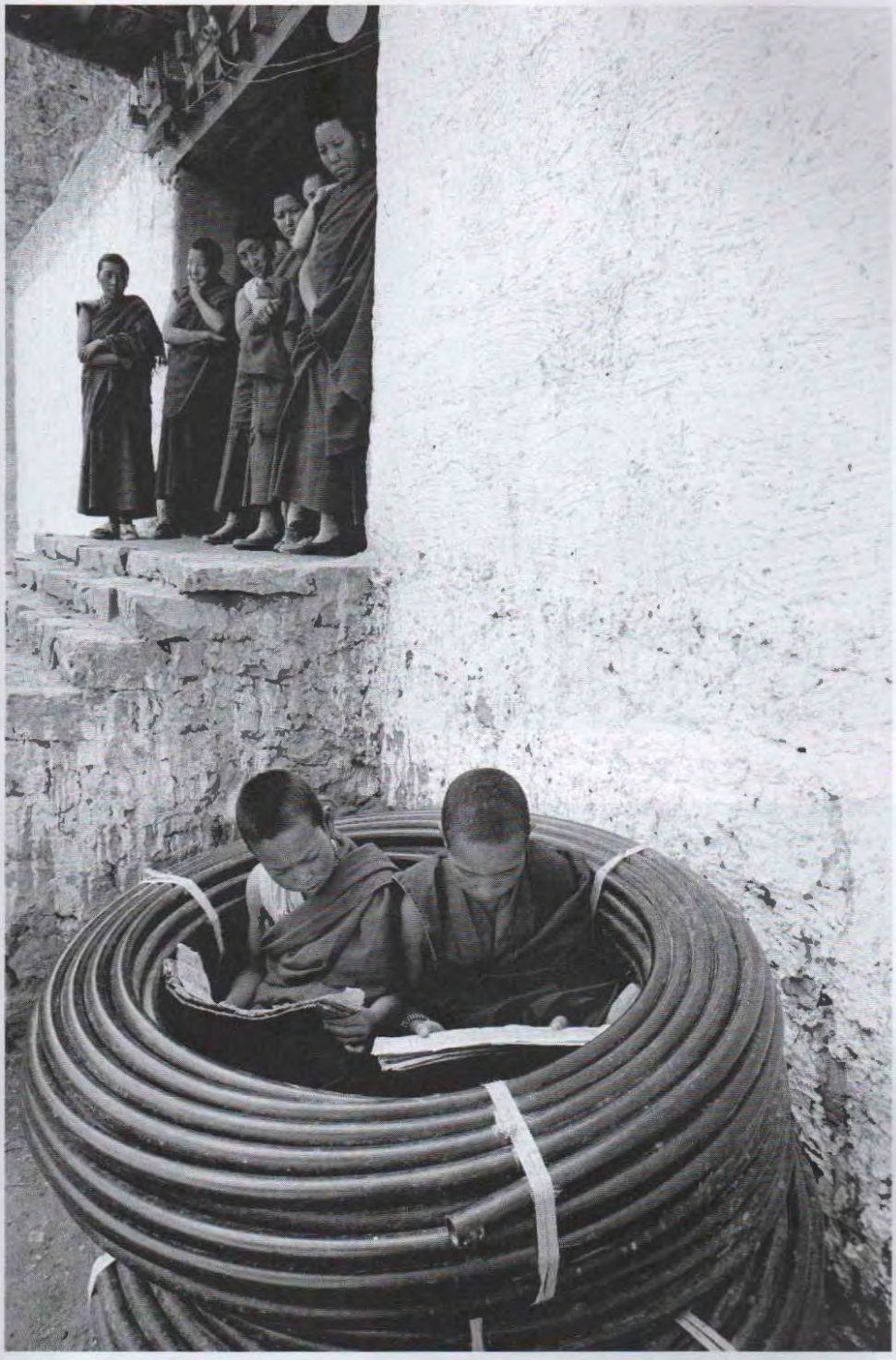
I have been photographing in Spiti, a culturally Tibetan community in north India, since 1993. A one-off fieldtrip has grown into an obsessive personal documentary project. Photography, for me, is as much a way of engaging with the world as a method of describing it.

The practice of documentary photography is rarely straightforward. It is seldom about mechanically recording the world as we see it. Images often emerge from uncontrolled and unpredictable encounters, so recognising what and when to photograph is often an intuitive rather than a rational process. I have found this to be particularly true when working within a culture radically different to my own. Revealing images arise when one's awareness and understanding align with some brief visual manifestation of the social world. Embracing the random nature of this process is one of the first important lessons of reportage. This kind of documentary photography is a complex journey in which the content, form and meaning of the project emerges through undertaking the practice and through subsequent editing. Far from providing illustrations of an already formulated and thoroughly comprehended perspective, visual practice is itself a vehicle towards gaining understanding. These images of Spiti, taken between 1993 and 2006, are informed personal impressions rather than a structured investigation yielding concrete answers to clearly defined questions.

Photography has the potential to distil the complexities of real human situations into images that combine the tangible with the symbolic. The key to this is the making of editorial choices: aesthetic decisions about visual structure and the relationship between appearance and meaning as well as semantic decisions about how the individual frame and wider edit coexist with what I am seeking to articulate. But I also edit for emotional as much as descriptive qualities, for what a selection of images feels like as well as what it looks like. I am documenting Spiti primarily through photographs of social relationships and people within their changing physical and social environment. I consciously aim to avoid reinforcing an escapist and romantic vision of Tibetan people blissed out on religion and, by extension, divorced from the real world. I want my work to feel less comfortable than that, to convey some of the community's complexity and struggles, and yet this work is also an expression of deep affection and affiliation.

There is often a tension between text and image in the way photographers present their work. Images are frequently more complex, perhaps more eloquent, than their captioning suggests. Far from being seen as problematic, the fundamental ambiguity of photographs is a quality many practitioners embrace. By avoiding the often reductive relationship of explanatory text placed next to photograph and its tendency to delimit images as illustrations, it is perhaps possible to allow for alternative readings and to open up greater space for the engagement of the audience's imagination.

Documentary photography projects involve a process of construction, the assemblage and sequencing of individual photographs into larger forms. Visual narratives establish connections and links between frames, independent of textual



linkages, sometimes blurring the simplistic division between fact and fiction, between objective recording and subjective authorship. All photographs are imbued with a trace of the real, but many practitioners embrace the idea of a possible transformation rather than a mirror of reality.

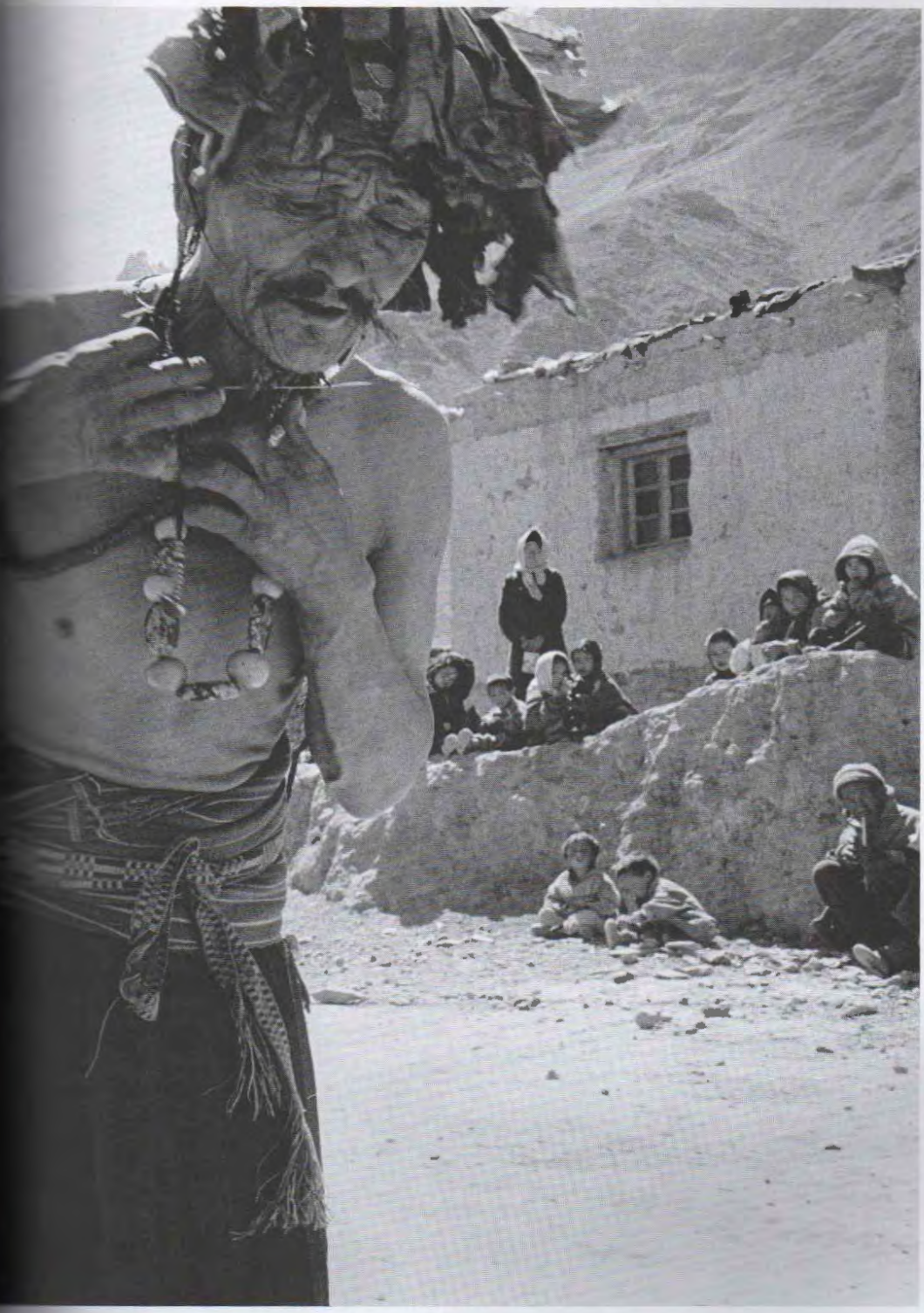
Each time I return to Spiti, my understanding of the community and of the photographs I have made shifts slightly. Each time the work is presented, exhibited or published I rework the captions, the edit and the overall narrative structure. The meaning of these images and the wider archive is not fixed, but evolves and sometimes emerges over time.

There is a clear distinction between the individual visual strategies of a practitioner and the anthropological aspiration of representing the world through the perspective of the people being studied. It is perhaps the centrality of authorship, visual style and personal expression to contemporary documentary photographers that most clearly separates their practice from much visual anthropology.

Documentary photography offers anthropology other possibilities apart from visual note-taking, the capturing of raw data for analysis or the illustration of preconceived ideas. Documentary photography is not merely about recording what we can already see: it is about a process of revelation, about making some of the complexities of the social world visible.

Large Spiti weddings are rich and complex ceremonies. They mark a pivotal process of change within households. Traditionally, after the first son gets married, he inherits the family home and the land. His parents eventually retire to another house and devote themselves to religious practice and his brothers enter the local monastery. The pattern of primogeniture is still the norm in Spiti, but younger brothers are frequently choosing to undertake educational training and seek paid employment. It is becoming increasingly common for them to lobby for a more equitable distribution of the estate.

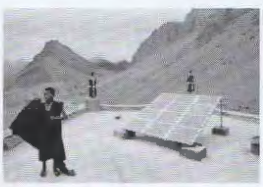
Spiti weddings are traditionally arranged by the parents but several of the weddings I have witnessed seem more of a formality, marking the family recognition of a couple who have already undertaken a civil marriage without parental approval. Such civil marriages, dismissively labelled 'love' marriages in Spiti, mark the increasing autonomy of younger people in Spiti and the challenge to established structures of power and authority.



5 · The late Khiu Tsering carrying paraffin and provisions home to Gede. He has spent the day turning the large prayer wheel at Key Monastery, accumulating merit to improve his prospects of a favourable reincarnation.

6 · Monks at Key Monastery rehearsing for the Cham, the masked dance festival. The dances are said to bestow good health, to subjugate disease and conquer evil spirits and were traditionally used to spread knowledge of Buddhism.

7 · The late Tsering Drolma carrying a child outside the entrance to her home in Pangmo. Like most nuns of her generation, she lived within the family home, dedicating her life to prayer and religious practice but also undertaking occasional domestic work.



8 · A young monk on the roof of Key Monastery. Solar power is perfectly suited to the high-altitude desert conditions of the Spiti valley.

9 · Young nuns studying religious texts at Pangmo Convent. The plastic piping is now installed and carries spring water from snow melting in the mountains.

10 · Urgyen Dhargye, a *nagpa*, a tantric practitioner, treating a young child who suffers from fits. He is blowing a mantra over the face of the child. Twenty years later, as I view this image I can recall the spluttering sound of the healing. I am also much more aware now of the elevated position of the healer and the respectfully lower position of the mother.

11 · Monks at Komik Monastery performing the Cham, the masked dance festival.

12 · In Gede, a man is washing the head of a *dzomo* (a yak–cow hybrid) salvaged from a snow leopard kill. Such a kill represents a major financial loss to a Spiti farmer. Government compensation schemes are not sufficient to prevent some villagers wanting to kill these endangered predators.

13 · A lorry ferries monks to the Kunzum La, the mountain pass at the head of Spiti, where an incense-burning ceremony is being performed to mark the departure from the valley of the Dalai Lama.

14 · A mile above the shrine on the Kunzum La, the mountain pass at the head of Spiti, the Dalai Lama is presiding over an incense-burning ceremony. Below the tent, villagers tend purifying fires of aromatic juniper.

15 · The interior of a typical Spiti house in Lossar. Family members and guests congregate around a metal box stove, source of heat and cooked food.

16 · The musician and singer Getukma plays a vital role in the weddings in Pin Valley, marking the journey of the bride from her home to her new husband's in song and music. Getukma's son now refuses to play music and consequently she has suffered ostracism within the community. Caste is a contested territory in Spiti and for lower-caste musicians to play music is to publicly perform their diminished social status.

17 · Two *nya-hon* in Kibber. These specialist performers carry the knowledge of traditional village wedding rituals, especially songs, dances and speeches.

18 · Singers from the bridegroom's party outside the bride's house during a wedding in Kibber. Behind the closed door, girls from the bride's family sing riddles to the visitors in a competition to repel the outsiders. From the rooftop they pelt the party below with barley flour and dried yak dung. Eventually, after much negotiation, the door will open to allow the visitors inside, to take the bride away.

19 · The bride and her consort weeping before she leaves her home forever. All of the older women in the room and many of the men are crying too. Spiti brides are expected to weep as they leave their family homes. In some marriages it is the groom who leaves his home and he too is expected to cry, as a mark of respect for the parents.

20 · At the end of a long Spiti wedding, a lower-caste musician lies drunk and exhausted. The yak head is a payment from the bride's family. These musicians are disappearing from Spiti, despite their fundamental role in the social calendar. The men often die young from alcohol abuse and few lower-caste children are being taught songs or to play instruments.

21 · The bride, on horseback, leaving her family home for the very last time. The village echoes with the cheering of the bridegroom's party and the weeping of women.

22 · The late Tsewang Rigzin, head Buchen from Sangnam, piercing his throat with a metal skewer and preparing to perform a sword dance. During the dance he will leap on to the tips of swords placed under his belly, his armpits or in his mouth. This performance is part of the stone-breaking ceremony. Buchen are disciples of the Tibetan 'Crazy Saint' Thangtong Gyalpo, who performed the stone-breaking ritual in Lhasa in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century.

23 · Two Buchen dressed as servants of the Lord of Death keep warm in a polytunnel in Langsa prior to a performance of the story of Lingza Chökyi. The play describes the principles of karma, the judgement of the dead and the suffering of those consigned to the realms of Hell.

24 · Head Buchen Getuk Sonam performs a stone-breaking ceremony on top of a house in Lhalung, invoking demons in order to trap them in a block of stone.

25 · Nyima Dorje performs as the deaf mother of the Drukpa Kunley. She was a non-believer. Her son was an enlightened 'Crazy Saint' who spread the *dharma* through wildly unconventional means.

26 · Dorje Dolma making chapatis for her family in Par.

27 · A performance of *The Elephant*, a popular play from the Buchen repertoire. During the play the Elephant will dance to the sound of cymbals and chanting, leaping and thrashing around wildly.

28 · Women clearing snow from the roof of their house in Morang. Houses are constructed from dried mud, which softens rapidly when exposed to water. Spiti is a high-altitude desert landscape, but changing weather conditions and increasing precipitation threaten houses and monasteries alike.

3 · Random Manhattan: thinking and moving beyond text

Andrew Irving

The limits of science

Figure 29 is a photograph I took at the intersection of 8th Avenue and West 23rd St in New York. I have a very simple question about it. Nevertheless, it is a question that places us not only beyond text but beyond anthropological understanding and the limits of science itself.

The question is *what are these people thinking?*

What, for example, is the woman on the right of the picture thinking? Or the man walking towards us wearing sunglasses? Or the man in the white shirt behind him? Or in fact any of the people in the picture? What is the empirical content and character of their thoughts? For, as with any crowded scene, people may be engaged in diverse, even radically discrepant, forms of internally represented speech and imagery, ranging from the mundane to the fantastical or tragic. The extent to which we can identify commonalities and discrepancies of thought or experience from outward appearances remains underdetermined and uncertain. From someone thinking about dinner, fantasising about a film star or deciding which shoes to buy, to the intense emotions of someone worried about losing their job or ending a relationship the experiential lifeworlds of the citizens that surround us are diverse,

29 ·

undetermined and never settled. As documented in 'The Suicidal Mind' (Irving 2014), a person might be walking around a city looking for a place to commit suicide or alternatively they may be returning from a hospital appointment having just been diagnosed with a terminal illness and are confronting the radical uncertainty of their own existence and future in a public place (Irving 2010, 2011). In each case the person remains a social being and is required to act accordingly, but their thoughts, intentions and existential circumstances are not necessarily made apparent to the wider world.

It is not always easy to discern people's current intentions, existential state and inner thoughts by external appearances, as made apparent in Eric Steel's documentary *The Bridge* (2006). The bridge in question is the Golden Gate Bridge, where Steel and his crew of twelve people arrived every morning for a year to film a year in the life of the bridge. The film captures twenty-three of the twenty-four known suicides that took place on the bridge that year, as well as numerous people who were talked down or otherwise dissuaded. The film crew managed to intervene on six occasions to prevent people jumping but for the most part there was little warning or indication who was contemplating ending their life. Indeed, the first jumper captured by one of the team's telephoto lenses was not acting at all in the manner that the film-makers expected. He was not crying, looking agitated or anguished or otherwise showing any extraneous signs of distress but rather was jogging and talking and laughing on his cell phone. Then all of a sudden he leapt to his death.

The extent to which the people we see in streets, parks and cafés are engaged in the same practice remains an open question. For once social life is understood as being constituted by ongoing streams of inner dialogue, imagery and reverie that exist beneath the surface of people's public actions, it reinforces the idea that the seemingly congruent social activities we observe are differentiated by diverse modes of internally represented speech and expression.

The centrality of inner speech to human experience – or what William James described as 'the mind's conversations with itself' (see James 2000: 239) – is understood as playing a key role in neurology, brain science and cognitive processing (Fernyhough 2013; Hurlburt 1990, 1993, 2009; Ward 2006). Accordingly, the essayist George Steiner's observation that 'it is very likely that [internal speech acts] represent the denser, statistically more extensive portion of the total distribution of discourse' (Steiner 1978: 65) is reinforced by studies of cognition and brain activity, as described by Peter Carruthers in the journal *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*:

> Although proportions vary, many people seem to spend a good deal of their waking activity engaged in 'inner-speech,' with imaged natural language sentences occupying a significant proportion of the stream of their conscious mentality. (Carruthers 2002: 657)

Simply put, without inner expression there would be no self-understanding or social existence, at least not in a form we would actually recognise. The capacity for a rich and imaginative inner life – which simultaneously encompasses inner speech, unarticulated moods, random urges, imaginative reverie and other forms of inner

expression that exist beyond third-party observation – is a distinctive and essential feature of human experience and is integral to many actions and practices. Despite the centrality of inner speech and expression, they remain largely uncharted by anthropology – the quintessential study of humanity – and are rarely, if ever, the focus of ethnographic research or anthropological monographs. In marked contrast to anthropologists, modernist writers and artists, from Dostoyevsky onwards, strove to explore and represent the complex streams of inner dialogue, thought and reverie that shape social life and interaction but remain publicly unavailable. In Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, murder is literally on the mind of the main character, Raskolnikov, as he walks around the alleys and arcades of St Petersburg debating the social, moral and existential implications of taking someone else's life. His murderous urges and internalised philosophical and moral debates remain unbeknown to the people who surround him and the strangers he passes in the street. Even his own mother, with whom he shares his house, is unaware that the son she lives with possesses such murderous thoughts. Raskolnikov becomes ever more intense in his desire to kill and, once he talks himself into action, murders a harmless old woman whom he sees as expendable and performing no real purpose or function. Afterwards, Raskolnikov's entire thinking and being is overshadowed by the crime he has committed and he can no more escape thinking about his murderous actions by staying in his room than by walking the streets. In the end his attentions turn to suicide as a practical means of escaping the thoughts that consume his mind throughout the day and night but he does not have the resolve to go through with it.

While Raskolnikov roams the public space of the street, the terminally ill Ivan Ilych lays on his bed dying in Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych*. Outwardly he performs his dutiful role as a husband, friend, work colleague and father, while the synchronous commentary going on in his head reveals a compelling story of competing affections and disaffections – much like those found in Tolstoy's own diaries towards the end of his life – and which is sometimes diametrically opposed to his public utterances and expressions. Instead of the stoic façade he presents to the world, Ivan Ilych wants to shout out his inner thoughts: 'Stop lying! You know and I know that I am dying. Then at least stop lying about it!' (Tolstoy 1960 [1886]: 143). Most of all he wants to weep and be pitied but instead assumes 'a serious, severe, and profound air'. When left alone, he strains to listen to his own inner voice and to capture the inchoate thoughts arising on the periphery of his consciousness:

> 'What is it you want?' was the first clear conception capable of expression in words that he heard. 'What do you want? What do you want?' he repeated to himself. 'What do I want? To live and not to suffer,' he answered. And again he listened with such concentrated attention that even his pain did not distract him. 'To live? How?' asked his inner voice. 'Why, to live as I used to – well and pleasantly.' 'As you lived before, well and pleasantly?' the voice repeated. And in imagination he began to recall the best moments of his pleasant life. But strange to say none of those best moments of his pleasant life now seemed at all what they had then seemed – none of them except the first recollections of childhood. (Tolstoy 1960 [1886]: 152)

Most famously of all, Joyce's *Ulysses* relies upon the content and rhythms of his three main protagonists' inner speech to tell a story of Dublin in a single day. We are introduced to Leopold Bloom as a man who eats with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls as he gets up and makes breakfast. Hunger satisfied, his thoughts turn away from food and soon after become infused with a familiar sense of unbelonging and disenchantment, for, despite being born and raised in Ireland, he often feels and sees himself as an outsider due to his Hungarian Jewish ancestry. Bloom's thoughts take on many different guises as we follow his inner commentary, political reverie and sexual urges throughout the course of the day, and we learn how his day-to-day life is couched in an existential tension that oscillates between feelings of contentment, dislocation and yearning. At times he sees himself at home in the city; at other times a sense of unbelonging shapes his inner dialogue, such as when a cantankerous one-eyed man, a.k.a. 'the citizen', hurls a biscuit tin at him for being Jewish. In doing so, Bloom's interior dialogue continually defines who he is in the specificity of the moment as he walks around the city: sometimes he is immersed in the task at hand, such as deciding which horse to bet on or masturbating; at other times his mind wanders between teenage memories, Irish politics and his wife, Molly.

Whether lying in bed or wandering the streets, the figures of Raskolnikov, Ilych and Bloom are so compelling precisely because we are allowed to enter into their minds and learn about the social and existential dilemmas they are facing and debating. To the outside world it may seem that nothing much is happening but once we enter their inner lifeworlds, we discover complex layers of expressive activity that range across time, space and subject matter from sexual desire to cooking, from childish fantasy to murder. The lack of ethnographic and methodological attention to these transitory and sometimes ungraspable realms is not so surprising given that interior dialogue is closely associated with Western selfhood, individualism and literature rather than being recognised as a shared phylogenetic capacity and aspect of daily life and human experience across the world. For the most part, anthropology has failed to venture where modernist writers have gone for many years. Recalling Edmund Leach's (1982) observation that anthropologists are basically 'bad novelists' – and Rodney Needham's (1978) decree that to achieve something of the 'humane significance' of art, anthropologists should try to write with the introspective insight and perspicacity associated with the modernist novel – I would argue that we might look more systematically to literature to engage with the insights authors have provided into the interior dialogues, existential debates and amorphous thoughts that anthropologists routinely overlook, either because they are methodologically unprepared to engage with such phenomena or because are unwilling to venture into the realms of consciousness that writers engage with when trying to understand social life and the human condition.

Nevertheless, there is an important and crucial distinction between literary and anthropological approaches: unlike literary works, an ethnographic understanding and representation of inner expression are required to offer truthful and empirically

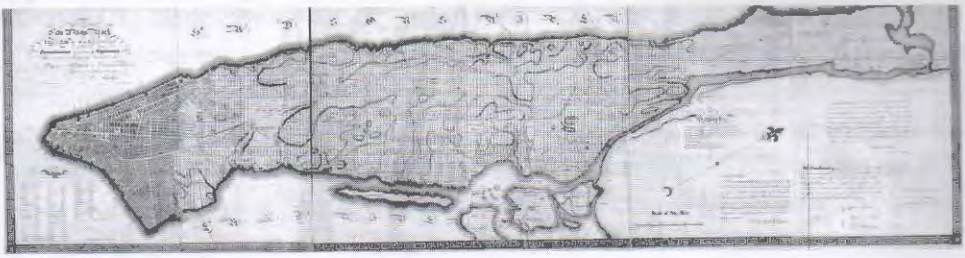
justifiable accounts of people's experiences in which persons are able to recognise themselves and their lifeworlds. This presents a significant epistemological, methodological and ethnographic challenge to social science and other evidence-based disciplines, especially if we are to go beyond literary text and research and represent the layers of inner expression or *thoughtscape* that lies beneath the surface of social life, including the frenetic urban spaces of Manhattan.

Manhattan's founding text

Manhattan, the original New York City, is an island approximately 12.5 miles long by 2.5 miles across and covers only 22.2 square miles of the modern city's 469 square miles. The city was founded in 1626, with construction beginning at Manhattan's southern tip and thereafter expanding northwards (Mackay 1987). At the time of the first census, in 1790, New York's population was a mere 33,111, and building had barely reached modern-day City Hall, which stands around a mile from the tip of the island and marked the city's northernmost extension. Chelsea and Greenwich were outlying villages, Midtown was farmland and large parts of the island were covered in swamps and thick woods. By contrast to today's long, straight avenues, many roads and paths meandered in accordance with the population's agricultural needs and requirements. Over the next twenty years, a massive increase in trade and immigration meant that by the 1810 census the population had tripled, to 96,373. Already anticipating further increases, the newly formed city commission engaged a twenty-year-old surveyor, John Randel, to survey the entire island, with the purpose of transforming its woods, swamps and grasslands into a place 'composed principally of the habitations of men', comprising 'straight-sided and right-angled houses' (Morris *et al.*, 1811).

Randel and his team spent three years painstakingly measuring and mapping Manhattan's entire topography, and the resulting map (7' 8" × 2' 1") offered unprecedented levels of detail about the island (Figure 30). Randel's map was hugely important in that it did not only map Manhattan's topography of the time but as it would become in the future, insofar as it superimposed a grid system over the agricultural lands, swamps and wilderness that comprised most of the island, and which determined the exact lines along which Manhattan would be built over the forthcoming century. As such, Randel's map, ratified on 22 March 1811, when he was just twenty-four years old, is none other than Manhattan's *founding text*, without which New York, as we know it, would not exist today.

The map proposed that the city's streets be straight, without curves or bends, set at right angles and numbered rather than named. Streets ran horizontally across the island, and were numbered 1–155, while avenues ran vertically and were numbered 1–12, with an additional A, B, C and D covering the swell of land on the Lower East Side. As such, the map's ratification in 1811 marks the date at which the city council attempted to build rationality into the city and the repercussions remain visible today in



30 • Manhattan's founding text: Randel's map of Manhattan (1811), which is held in the New York Public Library (full map above, with left-hand detail below)

the change of landscape north of Canal Street, where virtually every street and avenue follow straight lines. Building progressed from south to north at an incredible rate and in just over 100 years Manhattan's population rose from the 96,373 souls inhabiting the island when Randel's the map was drawn in 1810 to 2,331,542 in the 1910 census.

Randel's founding text comes to life every day through the perspectival horizons formed by the city's buildings, which offer a series of extended straight edges that enable citizens to look far into the distance and create the effect of walking within one of Canaletto's paintings. His text creates a frame of mathematical ratios, receding perspective lines and diminishing angles, guides the eye, and often the body, towards a vanishing point on the horizon: a point distant in time and space which is 'mathematically known in advance' through the modes of scientific reason embedded in trigonometry, military technology and perspectival painting (Heidegger 1977; Pinney 1995). At the same time, moving around Manhattan generates complex juxtapositions of sound, image, texture, taste and aroma. By deciding to walk down one street rather than another, by visiting a particular neighbourhood, taking a busy street or going to a park, supermarket or café people actively create their lived and sensory experience of the present (Irving 2007) in ways that cut across the city's claims to rationality (De Certeau 1984). The combination of Randel's layout and the moving body produces the conditions for anarchic and delirious forms of experience and expression insofar as:

> The grid's two-dimensional discipline also creates undreamt of freedom for three-dimensional anarchy. The Grid defines a new balance between control and de-control in which the city can be at the same time be ordered and fluid. (Koolhaas 1978: 20)

It is a text that produces a highly compressed social space for action and expression, as meticulously detailed by William H. Whyte (1980), who walked around New York for sixteen years from the 1960s to the 1980s as part of his revolutionary 'Street Life Project'. Whyte and his fellow researchers and students spent thousands of hours watching how people move, interact and use urban space within Manhattan, including intersections, malls, plazas and squares, and meticulously documented how pedestrians actively create their relationship to the street as they make their way around the city:

> They are skillful too, using hand signals, feints and sidesteps to clear the track ahead. They are natural jaywalkers, streaking across the diagonal while tourists wait docilely for the light. It is the tourists, moreover, who are vexing, with their ambiguous moves and maddeningly slow gait. They put New Yorkers off their game. (Whyte 1992: xxxi)

At mid-day, 1.2 million people, a population greater than that of some nations, cram into a square mile of midtown Manhattan, with pedestrians averaging up to 300 feet per minute as they walk along the sidewalks 22.5 feet wide (Whyte 1992). The combination of nervous stimulation and Manhattan's restricted grid system produces a highly compressed social space for action and expression. However, city dwellers are largely presented to each other as strangers and know little about the inner thoughts, existential concerns and imaginative lives of the fellow citizens they pass on the street.

Thinking and moving beyond text

By placing the living, thinking, moving body directly into the rational grid of Manhattan, this chapter, with its accompanying images and the sound recordings on the DVD, attempts to offer an ethnographically grounded account of how people's lived experiences of the city are mediated by complex amalgams of inner expression, memory and imagination that largely remain beneath the surface of their public activities. This extends an earlier notion of 'Walking Fieldwork' (Irving 2005, 2007, 2010), a technique where I walked alongside people as they carried out their everyday activities and asked them to narrate their thoughts and experiences out loud as they emerged in real time, in order to understand the phenomenology of the body in action. By listening to people's spontaneous narratives as they walked around familiar spaces and interacted with objects and places, my co-walkers offered glimpses into the streams of thought, mood and emotion that comprised their everyday life and experience but were not usually publicly expressed. However, whereas 'Walking Fieldwork' was largely directed towards understanding the inner expressions and dialogues of people living with illness and crisis, the current chapter attempts an ethnographic engagement with Simmel's classic argument in *Metropolis and Mental Life* (1903) that cities create distinctively urban modes of experience and expression due to the 'intensification of nervous stimulation which results from the swift and uninterrupted change of outer and inner stimuli' (Simmel 1950 [1903]: 409).

Drawing on modernist literature, the following photo-essay, the sound recordings on the DVD that accompanies this volume and the online videos mentioned below derive from a practice-based research project, 'New York Stories', for which I recorded more than 100 interior dialogues of random strangers encountered as they moved around the city. A central concern was how the diverse social spaces of urban life have the potential to generate different modes of thinking and being, and divided New York into different zones of thought, namely *streets, bridges, cafés, squares, transport.* The method was very simple. I approached random persons I encountered in these areas and asked them what they were thinking about in the moment immediately before I approached them. I then explained the project and invited them to wear a small microphone and speak outloud the stream of their thoughts as they continued with activities. I was surprised not just by the level of interest in the nature of the project but also by the number of people, from all walks of life, who said *yes.*

The reader is now invited to read the photo-essay, or they can watch some short video excerpts online, or they can download sounds clips from the DVD onto their phone or MP3 player and walk around their own neighbourhood with someone else's thoughts in their head: or sit in a café or cross a bridge or ride a train. In the interests of space, the following transcripts represent only about three or four minutes each but are taken from the full-length recordings, which range from fifteen to ninety minutes. They are also presented without background information, akin to the way that people mostly encounter each other in the city's public spaces – as strangers – and provide an

experiential affinity with the way persons dwelling alongside each other in cities are often unaware of the inner lives of the people who surround them.

Load 'New York Stories' sound files from the *Beyond Text?* DVD onto an MP3 player or smart phone.

Or watch the video excerpts here:

https://vimeo.com/64922792
https://vimeo.com/64922800
https://vimeo.com/64922801
https://vimeo.com/64922797

Meredith: looking for Staples stationery store in SoHo

Alright, I wonder if there's a Staples around here. You know I thought she was going to tell me that her cat died. I was prepared to cry about her cat. And then ... I'm trying not to cry about her. I mean New York without Joan is just ... I can't even imagine it. She'll probably be fine though. I loved that line about having a 20 per cent chance of being cured. And how a friend of hers said would you go on a plane that had a 20 per cent chance of crashing ... no, of course not. It's hard to get through though; she does put up quite a wall of words. I mean it's not ... it's not easy to get through. Get through to her and really express something that's from the heart ... I guess from the heart is the right word ... I don't know ... it's not like she's being disingenuine when she speaks it's just she has such a formal old-fashioned style of speaking and it's very controlled and I guess she had told a lot of people before me and so she had said the words 'I have cancer' a lot. That used to be a great place to sit and people watch now it's all sit down. Oh my god look at all these people this is going to be really annoying I guess I'll go this way, I think there's a Staples

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down here. I don't want to be the last leaf on the tree ... what does that ... what's that supposed to do? I mean it looks like she's in the position of having to reassure the people that she tells that she has cancer to make them feel okay about it because not only does she have to deal with her own self falling apart but she has to deal with other people falling apart at the news of her falling apart. So ah, I'm supposed to be looking for something ... oh this all this crappy

... it's like a mall here now it's so awful. You can't even move in a straight line ... okay yeah, it's like blockades. It's smart that she's not looking at those x-rays ... another smoker ... I remember thinking when she had that cough when we saw her, she always has some kind of cough but this cough sounded different and she did say that she had the flu and then that flu didn't go away and then she lost her appetite, so she got herself checked out. I have cancer ... that was the one, I could hear it in the way she said it, that every time she says it, it doesn't get any easier. What is this craziness, five cars in the middle. Of course sometimes I'm that driver too. Alright now is there a Staples down there? I think there is.

Thomas: killing time on Manhattan Bridge, waiting for a bus to Boston

The man today. The man who has children and the man who doesn't have children. Seeing how this country was made up during the '40s and the '20s and everything. And the automobiles is the one that put masses of people to work. Fifty, sixty thousand people to work and here was people who didn't have a lot of education and there were people who did have education but you got masses of people like from Detroit Michigan that came from the South, because they were share croppers or other than that they worked on the farms and they heard that the North had jobs in the plants, was able to provide and prosper. Well they could not imagine today and having lived during the time of the Great Depression. My grandfather he fed his children from the soup line, that's how bad it was during the time of the first Great Depression, during the Roosevelt times. So here it is now, how can this economy get off now when you've got these masses of generations and generations and generations of families that worked in some kind of factory that don't have no jobs, so what what what is going to pay they bills, knowing you understand that there's nothing to offer and this is the reason why, like in Detroit Michigan right now they've got 93,000 foreclosures and abandoned

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buildings. Now there's 56 million people unemployed right now and it's still going high. The only way that I see of anything there's going to have to be a factory that builds cars that fly to turn this whole thing around because of the fact of one thing: you got to put masses of people to work at one time and the economy makes its money off of people who own houses. Who pay taxes and everything and if you got everybody you understand losing everything then we're heading towards another Great Depression, a repeat of history but this one is going

to be more dangerous than the first one because life is more expensive, a loaf of bread use to cost a quarter now a loaf of bread costs two dollars, a half a gallon of milk use to cost a dollar twenty-five now it costs almost five dollars, so the economy that we're living now is going to be more serious with this side. We're only one inch from a depression. That means okay let's say you understand the United States do get some people to work but now by as money being invested all over the world, if the world falls and these different countries fall out of economics, the United States is going to fall. And there ain't no ifs or else or buts about it and that's the unsurety of the future.

Jim, Crosby St

I think in Hannah Arendt's book she talks about totalitarianism as being this system in which people's minds are taken over by the government. It sounds weird to say that but their minds are taken over through fear and terror. And it penetrates everything that they do. I mean it doesn't really matter who you are or what your job is or anything like that, everybody is subject to the same fears and terrors and that's where the phrase 'of the masses' comes from, which I never knew before: an undifferentiated classless mass because everyone's basically motivated by fear. I think in our society here, then it's kind of the same but different, everyone's motivated by consuming. And one of [the] things I like about this place here where I am now is that's they're very few, like advertisements and the signs for the stores and things are small and it's more human scale whereas in other parts of the city or other parts of the country, then there's huge amounts of, well I guess advertising of one kind or another and instead of you thinking what you want to think, then you think whatever the last ad that you saw was. And there's a guy coming towards me wearing jeans and a kind of a sweater and talking on the phone and I wonder what he does. You pass people like that and maybe they have very interesting

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lives and who knows what, you just don't know. Now there's a guy with a yellow fleece jacket and baggy pants and it looks like he's a delivery guy for some store and I wonder how people like that get by in the city, where do they live and how do they possibly make enough money to live here, and what kind of lives do they have when they're not at work. It's always a mystery to me I just don't understand it. I think those fire escapes were put in place after there was some fires in New York City in about 1900 where [a] large number of people were trapped in buildings and died in the fire because there was no fire escape. So

the city was filled with these fire escapes that were added on the outsides of buildings so that everybody had access to the outside and could get out if there was a fire. And it's uhm, it just sort of shows how, you know you have to have a government that looks after people. You can't have housing that people get burnt alive in 'cause they can't get out or factories that they get burnt alive in and you can't get out. So when you come to this part of the city a lot of the buildings have these fire escapes and to me it's a statement that I guess you know on the one hand the people that lived here were taken advantage of and were immigrants and they worked hard for low pay and so on but on the other hand you look at these fire escapes and in a sense they were looked after as well. I guess after the fact. Again it's sort of people-sized architecture. Hand rails. Steps that people could walk down. It defines what the city looks like here and it says a lot about the people that lived here and their experiences and so that's why I like to come and wander around this part of the city. And now a cab or something went past playing a Beatles song, 'It's Been a Hard Day's Night'. I remember that when I was um, when that first came out and I was living in England and the movie was black and white and I remember going to go and see it with my mates, I was I must have been in university. Robert Reid he was a law student. That's who I went with. We shared a flat. He went and worked for the um, His Majesty's Revenue Service, I think, the taxation people in England, as a tax lawyer. I lost contact with him. I lost contact with some of my friends from that time when I moved to North America. Oh, there's a horse-shoe in the pavement here. Maybe it will bring me luck. And here's another one. It's outside of the Lunella Italian Restaurant I must be getting into Little Italy now.

Sara, Brooklyn Bridge: on holiday in New York from Israel

To walk here and to watch the water and to be on the bridge is something that is not so easy to express but it's like flying let's say, like flying on water ... maybe it's kind of wishes, you like to fly, to be like a bird and the bridge gives us the opportunity to do something above nature, let's say, so, uhm, recently it's not so ... because of the walls here ... they have some walls here but when I see the bridge itself ... it's funny it's something like magnetic, it's mystic, like a kind of magic. The one who built this bridge did something good ... made something good ... maybe they thought that they had to help progress, to help people, to make it easier to move from one place to another, maybe a lot of

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care and love were there when he did it, he thought about it. Maybe he was crazy in his time, as all the good people. And there must be something in it, that people are just enjoying it, otherwise no

one would come. It's not the walls, it is something in it. We don't see it in regular eyes, I think, so maybe it sounds mystic or something but ah I get calm because something makes me happy and maybe this is feelings, to feeling happy to feel joy without any reason, like this is very busy the happiness, the real happiness, just to be happy, not because, just I don't know it sounds crazy what I'm saying but that is what is what I'm feeling now.

You know I have a poster at home and I just like it as it is and I don't know why because I like art but not because of that. Something in the photo makes you want to come and see the place, so ah but the same talk I could say about any happening somewhere good and nice and interesting. A picture of Rembrandt, Picasso, architecture, something ... it's the same but in it. I'm trying to understand my joy let's say.

I left. It's a nice day and I said I want to be here and God heard me and he make a nice day to come and to say goodbye New York and go home....

Tony: walking from Chelsea to the East Village

All focus ... in this ... commitment ... doesn't matter which, suck it up or let it go. She said come to a compromise: suck it up or let it go. Yeah but what am I letting go of? Thank you ... practice I'm living a beat ... come on come on come on come on ... excuse me ... far out ... Christ's sake ... walk away ... that was right, walk away ... it's a compromise ... look suck it up or to move on ... just walk away ... I understand the thing about not telling everybody ... but I'm not everybody ... you two are having a goddamn baby ... a phone call would have been good. Who's listening? This is not one of those times ... clear ... it is totally clear. Move forward ... the thing is it could be an out, when they told me they were having a baby I felt a bit out ... I felt a bit pushed out. But now maybe it's an escape hatch ... I was pissed before but must admit, not so pissed anymore ... now it could work to my advantage ... I am certain that this is an out, it's started ... or I can learn, yet I'm looking at this positively now. I was pissed before, I felt like you two were a family now ... now I'm looking at this positively and you two are a family now. And I have an out which is kind of

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cool because I said from the start: no babies, no marriage ... I really meant it ... we dodged that bullet bro. Who do I feel happiest about? What makes me feel most loved? What could I feel? Into a tunnel and then out of the tunnel. An unconscious mind again. Think of your successful self will improve and confident, 100 per cent sure. Asshole ... you stupid useless person. I wish my own plan didn't include having myself relegated to the past but ... look up ... just by using your mind ... bright ... walk tall, solid foundation ... 'n' she'll be coming from the right-hand side, from the left, operating machinery. When you can relax completely....

A return to text

There is no objective or independent access to another person's consciousness or experience; as such, the visual and sound pieces collected for this chapter and on the DVD offer only the tiniest glimpse into those realms of experience that can be articulated and approximated through words and images within a public, narrative encounter, and are necessarily subject to self-censorship and the act of recording, which would have influenced the content and character of the material in indeterminate ways. Moreover, not all thought processes take place in language, and they routinely incorporate various non-linguistic and non-symbolic modes of thinking and being that operate beyond or at the threshold of language, while, as Kant pointed out, we cannot even objectively access our own consciousness, insofar as whenever someone attempts to observe 'his inner self [he] can only recognise himself as he appears to himself, not as he absolutely is' (Kant 2006 [1798]: 30).

People's internal expressions range from inchoate and barely graspable forms that exist on the periphery of consciousness to more explicit and well defined forms that coalesce and become articulated in stable linguistic and symbolic categories for particular purposes – for example describing, analysing, communicating or decision-making – that offer to oneself and others a basis for narrative expression. As such, the inner dialogues we are listening to are performative instantiations of the type of inner voice and linguistic representation through which people self-consciously understand, negotiate and reimagine their surroundings, themselves and others. This involves a rendering of experience into speech, which can be likened to the ekphrastic language used to describe art. Coming from the Greek *ek* (out) and *phrasis* (to speak), ekphrasis relies on the translation of one form into another, for example when offering a verbal description of a visual phenomenon, such as when describing a painting or sculpture in words to someone who has never seen it. The image that the eye registers contains far more information than can be simultaneously described, whether that is Manhattan's street life or an artwork. When understood as part of a wider range of corporeal and sensory effects that constitute someone's lived experience, it is necessary to recognise that what is present in lived experience and perception far exceeds that which can be articulated in the moment or through the linear modalities of speech or text.

Nevertheless, as Meredith, Thomas, Jim, Sara and Tony walk through the city narrating their thoughts, it soon becomes apparent that there are as many ways of thinking as there are of speaking, and by accompanying people on their journeys or as they sit in cafés or walk across bridges we are offered a glimpse into the different modes of internally represented speech, sensation, mood, emotion and memory that constitute the everyday social life and thoughtscape of the city. The recordings make it apparent that New York's streets, cafés, bridges and squares are complex sites of experience and expression, which at times can be highly dramatic or theatrical, except we cannot see or hear the myriad inner dialogues that are going on underneath the surfaces of people's public activity.

Meredith's inner dialogue, for example, stretches from the trivial to the tragic over a few short steps as she begins by looking for a Staples stationery store to buy CD covers, then shortly after is dwelling on a friend's cancer diagnosis she learnt about the previous night. Meanwhile, she looks over the road and notices a café she likes to watch people in. Thomas is concerned with people's prospects in the current social and economic climate and his thoughts are organised as a sustained social analysis and argument about the position of working people and the historical migration of black workers from the agricultural south to the industrial north. It tells us a lot about the historical constitution of thought and consciousness and quite a few inner dialogues were explicitly linked to the global economic uncertainty and national security concerns that have overshadowed many people's social lives since 9/11 and the banking crisis. Tony's thoughts, as with many other inner dialogues I recorded, concern the centrality of social and personal relations to everyday life. Tony, a writer and video artist, is walking to his house, with thoughts emerging in staccato bursts: as he walks quicker and his blood circulates faster, he begins to get more argumentative with himself as he negotiates a significant life event and keeps returning to the same words, *suck it up or let it go.*

Jim, a retired doctor from Manchester, England, habitually spends afternoons roaming New York exploring the ambience and architecture of different Manhattan neighbourhoods: a passing car playing the Beatles' 'A Hard Day's Night' transports him from the immediacy of Manhattan to an evening in 1964 in Birmingham, England, and he starts thinking about a friend he has not seen for more than forty years. Sara, her thoughts stylised and poetic, is visiting New York from Israel and is walking across Brooklyn Bridge for the first time in her life: she is feeling ecstatic and comes to the conclusion that a kind of magic exists within the bridge itself that makes her and others happy. Now she is retired she is able to travel and see for herself the things that have inspired her throughout her life.

Ending

Although people's modes of inner being and expression are continuous with – and indivisible from – their public actions and expressions, they are not necessarily identical to them. For although a person's sense of being can be articulated and approximated in linguistic or narrative form (Carr 1986; Jackson 2002), it is not possible to understand people's narratives as simple representations of experience (Berger 1982) unless one adopts a misplaced commitment to referential models of language and correspondence theories of truth alone (Quine 1960). Without the ability to construct private/public spheres of action within everyday acts of meaning and representation, numerous aspects of social life would be severely compromised, including people's abilities to interpret, understand, analyse, strategise and respond while engaged in social interaction in the presence of other persons and situations.

Social relations, secrecy, lying and much else besides would be rendered impossible, as persons would be unable to hold private information, values and intentions in their mind that differ from those that they publicly articulate.

The discrepancy between people's internally represented expressions and their objective, public manifestations reinforces how inferences and interpretations that derive from outward, objectively available forms are not necessarily justifiable in their own terms, and thereby calls into question the epistemological validity and evidential basis for making claims about persons without attempting to account for the complex, ever-changing reality of their inner lifeworlds. For example, in Geertz's (1973) famous elaboration of Gilbert Ryle's discussion of the difference between a blink, a conspiratorial wink and an involuntary twitch, he demonstrates how actions that are otherwise indistinguishable to the eye may lead the observers to the mistaken conclusion that they are witnessing the same activity, unless they are aware of the relationship between the intentionality of the person and the wider social context. Thus, in order to differentiate between the possible intentionalities that lay behind similar actions, Geertz argues that anthropologists have to rely on 'guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses' (1973: 20). However, as Crapanzano points out, this approach remains somewhat limited insofar as it 'offers no understanding of the native from the native's point of view' and provides 'no specifiable evidence for his attributions of intention, his assertions of subjectivity, his declarations of experience' (Crapanzano 1992: 67). David Carroll (1987) makes a case that art often retains a capacity to open up and outline a conceptual territory that academic theories and ideas tend to follow. In response, I would argue that a collaborative, practice-based ethnographic approach to research that utilises narrative, visual and sound media and movement to investigate and represent the complex amalgamations of inner dialogue, reverie, mood and imagination that exist beneath the surfaces of people's public activities not only enables us to construct more precise and accurate understandings of people's experiences and actions but has the potential to generate more realistic ethnographies and representations of social life, in which anthropological subjects can recognise within the text the qualities of their own subjectivity and lived experience.

This gives weight not only to Heidegger's argument that people's interactions with, and understandings of, the world are never free-floating, insofar as they are always disclosed through a specific state of mind (Heidegger 1962), but also to William James's notion that while experience and consciousness are fluid properties generated through action they are also partially constituted by various modes of thinking and being that repeat or persist over time so as to create an experience of a world seemingly 'shot through with regularities' and 'essentially bound up with the way in which one moment in our experience may lead us towards other moments' (James 2000: 90).

Heidegger also employs the term *Ausserlichkeit* (outwardness, externality) to describe the superficial appearances of routine actions and concerns; and

'everydayness' to describe 'the pallid lack of mood that dominates the "grey everyday" through and through' (1962: 395). Heidegger is not assigning a negative character to everyday life but, rather, arguing that people's interactions with familiar objects and places are always accompanied by a specific state of mind. However, the five representative inner dialogues used in this chapter, out of the 100 that were collected, suggest Heidegger erroneously conflates the exterior expression of ordinary, everyday activities with people's lived, experiential interior. Thus, by making inferences and assertions based on outward appearances, people's ongoing interactions are ascribed a lack of mood rather than the complexity and diversity of emotions, feelings and dilemmas that are recounted by Meredith, Tony, Sara, Thomas and Jim.

This holds important anthropological implications, in that it cautions against the conflation of routine social activities with a particular interiority or theorising and against representing anthropological subjects without taking account of the complex, ever-changing reality of their inner lifeworlds. Grounding anthropological truth claims in people's inner expressions and according them an active role in shaping anthropological text not only offers a more realistic understanding of social life but creates a responsibility for accurately representing people's inner lives that go beyond text: Meredith debating the tragic irony of thinking her friend's cat was dying and then finding out it was the friend; Thomas thinking about Depression-era Detroit, the soup kitchen and the future of the automobile industry; Jim crossing the ocean to remember one night at the cinema in 1964 during his youth; Sara imagining herself flying above the water and thinking about the personality of the man who designed the bridge she had waited so long to walk on; Tony contemplating what might happen if a close friend has a baby....

4 · Exile, the sorrow of time and place

Lydia Nakashima Degarrod

> As I lay in bed I listened to the sounds of dogs barking, the wind rustling leaves in the trees outside my house, and small animals running on the roof. Fearful that these noises announced the arrival of the secret police, I rehearsed what I was going to say to them, how I was going to beg them not to hurt me. I was afraid I would become another *desaparecido*. (Temuco, Chile, 1987)

Memories, images and feelings of fear from my years living in Chile under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973–90) came to me as I worked on the art installation *Geographies of the Imagination*, which explored the internal images of long-term exile. During my tenure as Artist and Scholar in Residence at the Center for Art and Public Life at the California College of the Arts (2007–08) I created, with the collaboration of nine Chilean political exiles, nine videos and twenty-three monoprint affective maps that were displayed in the installation (see Figure 36). As we worked together, the exiles were inundated with memories, images and reflections about their identities and places of belonging as they participated in the creation of the images and the videos for the exhibition, as well as when they later viewed them. My own memories which were triggered when listening to the narratives of the political exiles also became part of this interactive circuit of images and remembering.

The different stages of this collaborative art-making created an interactive circuit in which images and memories circulated. As co-creator with the exiles of the prints and videos, I was an active part of this circuit, contributing to the creation of both memories and images. In my two roles of cultural anthropologist and visual artist, I became a catalyst for social experiences and connections merging the realms of both relational aesthetics and performative anthropology (Bourriaud 2006; Fabian 1990).

In this chapter, I use the creation of the monoprint of one exile, Eliana, to illustrate how the process of collaborative art-making and image creation triggers ongoing acts of remembering in which the resulting images elicit further memories and reflections on identities and places of belonging. Writing from my dual perspective as a visual artist and an anthropologist, I present these memories, images and reflections with an

36 · *Geographies of the Imagination* at the California College of the Arts, 2008

'artisan approach to anthropology', as they happened during interactions with people who participated in this project (Harris 2007).

Exile and collaborative art-making

Eliana arrived in the United States in 1974, as a political exile, as part of the largest wave of migration in the history of Chile, when approximately 2 per cent of the country's population either fled or were expelled by the Pinochet regime. In 1973 General Pinochet took over after a bloody *coup d'état* that deposed the democratically elected socialist presidency of Salvador Allende. As a way of purging the country of potential opposition to his government, Pinochet killed, arrested or sent into voluntary or forced exile over 200,000 people during his tenure (Sznajder and Roniger 2007). Half of the participants of *Geographies of the Imagination* left Chile after spending time in prison and having undergone torture and arrived in the United States as political refugees with the letter L marked in their passport, which denied them re-entrance to Chile. Eliana arrived as a voluntary exile, as did the remaining half of the participants who fled the country for fear of imminent arrest or being killed by the secret death squads sponsored by the Pinochet government. Eliana had to wait seventeen years to return to her homeland, a return visit that turned out to be a disenchanting and painful experience for her, as it was for the rest of the exiles. They realised that the homeland

had changed and that they had changed too. Eventually, they all chose the United States as their permanent home.

Many of the participants in this project expressed a desire to tell their stories for both political and personal reasons. As a political gesture, telling their stories was a way of fighting back against the misinformation created by 'the myth of the golden exile' spread by Pinochet's government, in which exiles were depicted enjoying a life of luxury and privilege, and against the silence, or 'policy of obliteration', maintained by the post-dictatorship governments about the exiles (Wright and Oñate 2012). It was also, for some, a way to recall the past, as they had repressed their memories in order to cope with the difficulties of life in exile and raising their families in a foreign country.

The participants used the term 'exile' instead of 'refugee' – which is the legal term used by governments and international organisations – because of the connotations of the word in both Spanish and English. *Refugiados* connotes victimisation, a lack of agency of a mass of people whose fate is at the mercy of international organisations (Eastmond 1997; Said 2000), whereas the term 'exile' is associated with individuality and a more dignified attitude towards the person. The Chilean participants had experienced different forms of exile throughout their forty years living away from their homeland. A major change had been the shift from a public form of exile to its current private form. Under the dictatorship of Pinochet, the exiles made their lives public by participating in social and political events aimed at denouncing the dictatorship and their exile. These activities waned with the return to democracy in Chile.

Today, they experience exile privately, manifested primarily in their discontinued sense of self and place of belonging. They have maintained their identification as exiles – in spite of having the freedom to return to their homeland – for moral and political reasons related to the leniency exhibited by the post-dictatorship government towards those who had committed human rights violations during the Pinochet regime, alongside the lack of resolution in addressing specific damages suffered by some of them.

Exile and creating affective maps

The use of the medium of maps for the installation – with its association with official and historical documents – was intended to validate and make public the individual journeys of those exiles who have been ignored and forgotten by official Chilean history. I used monoprint print-making as the main method of making the maps (in the form of banners – see Figure 36) for the installation to emphasise the uniqueness of each exile's journey. The monoprint technique, unlike other forms of printing, creates only one edition of the image. In each of the monoprints, I combined the use of stencils and photo-image transfers, a method I have used effectively in the past to incorporate a sense of media-documented reality in artworks, to remind viewers that what they are seeing was derived from real events (Degarrod 2010). For

37 · Jaime's memories of journey

the image transfers I used photographs taken previously by the exiles or myself, and photographs from newspapers and magazines that I altered using different proportions of etching ink, media and solvents to create different effects. The images were printed on an etching press on sheets of acetate 48 inches by 60 inches (see Figure 37).

Map-making provided an entrance to the sharing of memories and images (Irving 2007) and also served as a mnemonic device for the exiles to recall forgotten aspects of their lives, both in Chile and in exile. The process of creating the images, which I had developed for previous projects, involved the following sequence of steps, which was repeated until the desired images had been created:

(1) listening to an exile's narrative of their journey of migration;
(2) creating images at my studio;
(3) holding a review session, in which the exile assessed each image in terms of its fidelity with their memories.

In addition to the creation of images, I used the ethnographic methods of interviewing and of participant observation. I also conducted library research on exile and on the historical events surrounding the regime of Augusto Pinochet. As importantly, I drew on my own personal knowledge and experience of growing up in Chile, and of conducting anthropological research in Chile during the Pinochet dictatorship.

First stage of the making of Eliana's map: narrative of a journey of exile

18 April 2008
At her home

'I have never heard of you,' she said, as she hugged and kissed me in the customary way that Chileans greet one another. She was referring to her circle of Chileans living in the Bay Area. 'How long have you lived in California?' she asked me as we sat in her living room. I told her that I had lived in the San Francisco Bay Area for almost ten years and for twenty years in different parts of the United States. She was surprised that I had made no effort to get to know the local Chilean community. Feeling a bit embarrassed, I explained that my first five years living in the United States were in Hawaii, where people from Chile are rare. Afterwards, when I moved to Los Angeles, a city with a large population of Chilean immigrants where I could have developed relationships, I was juggling an art career and studying for a PhD in anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). She listened quietly to my explanation and said that her friends had primarily been Chileans, and that she had relied on the community of exiles for emotional and practical support. Without their support, she said, she would not have been able to survive in the United States. I felt that our differences had created a gulf between us. After a while, she told me her story.

> I arrived in Berkeley in 1974. I never thought that I would leave Chile. My husband Fernando and I had supported the government of Salvador Allende. We both worked at the *University of Chile*; he was the Dean of the Department of Architecture and I worked as a researcher at the Institute of Economy. My children were small, three and seven years old.... Soon after the coup, the radio announced the lists of people who must voluntarily present themselves for arrest. Almost everyone who worked with us was named in the list.[1] ... We knew that Fernando's call was imminent because he belonged to the Patriotic Front of Professionals, and because of his prominent position as a dean. Neither of us belonged to a political party, but we both had been active supporters of Allende's government. He couldn't stay at home because he was afraid it would be the first place they would come looking to arrest him. Fernando was fired from his job at the university and most of my work colleagues were arrested. We didn't know where we could go. We knew that we couldn't stay in Chile....

At this point, she stopped and her eyes filled with tears. I leaned towards her and held one of her hands, stroking it as she cried. I asked her if she wanted to continue with her narrative. She nodded and, moving her hand away from mine, continued with her story.

> These were the most anguished moments of my life, searching for a place to escape Chile. I couldn't eat. I ceased living. I was afraid to go to bed, not knowing whether they were coming to arrest me that night. I felt as if they had already arrested me. In my head, I went over more than 1,000 times what I was going to do or say when they arrested me. I was ready. Every time there was a knock at our

door, I hid the children under the bed. I didn't tell them what was happening because they were too small, but they soon realised something was wrong, and terror entered their minds. Horrible accusations, all lies, were made against us, one being that when Fernando was the Dean, the flag of Russia flew higher on the campus than the Chilean flag.

Eliana shook her head and then gazed towards the window. Her shoulders sagged and she sobbed as she hugged herself, her body leaning forward towards her lap. We were quiet for a while. She then sat upright on the sofa and looked at me. There was rage in her face.

> You feel like an animal that they are chasing. I used to think if I was arrested I was going to justify my actions to them and ask to be forgiven, because I believed I was a bad person. It was a situation of fear and terror. I had always wanted to have children, and this was the only time in my life when I regretted it. I used to lament to Fernando, 'Why did we have children in such a cruel world!' I used to think about all the people who had been tortured, and about the cadavers I had seen in the streets and in the press.... I thought about human nature. The people you trusted most wouldn't help you, and people you thought would do nothing for you were the ones who helped. Finally, three months later, UC Berkeley invited Fernando to teach for one semester. He left and I stayed behind with the children for an extra month to sell the house.

A faint smile illuminated Eliana's face. She sighed.

> I had a tremendous sense of relief when Fernando left. I knew that things would be much easier. I didn't need to worry every night about what could happen to Fernando. Before he left, he had been sleeping in a different place every night because we were afraid he would be arrested or killed. At those moments, I never knew if I would see him again.... I sold the house and even took a little vacation at the beach with the children, before we left for the United States.

Eliana smiled broadly. As she recalled her arrival in the United States, her face was illuminated, her cheeks became red and her eyes shone with excitement. Her body straightened and she was full of excitement, moving her hands and gesticulating with great joy.

> When I arrived here, I felt as if I had fallen in love. It was January of 1974. I walked with the children on Shattuck Avenue, and they asked me why I was so happy. I was skipping in the streets while holding my children's hands. I felt in love with this place. Finally, I could express myself without fear of being arrested.

While life in Berkeley was emotionally easier for Eliana, she faced the tribulations of living in the United States without a permanent visa. After ten years of living with a string of temporary visas, Eliana was able to obtain the desired permanent-resident visa when she got a job that qualified her for one. Eliana told me with pride in her voice and in her demeanour that then she was finally able to provide her family with the security derived from a permanent-resident visa.

When the Pinochet regime ended in 1990, and after living in exile for sixteen years, Eliana and her family considered returning to Chile, as many of their old

friends who were exiled in different countries began to return. However, Eliana chose to remain in the United States for two reasons. The first was the realisation that a return to Chile would create more exiles: their children, who had lived most of their lives in the United States. The other reason was the cultural and time gap Eliana experienced when she visited Chile after sixteen years of living abroad. Weeping, Eliana described her visit to Chile, and her disconnection to time and place:

> I spent one week crying. My aunt asked me why; I told her it was because of the time that had passed. I walked on the street and thought I had recognised somebody. I thought I knew this person, but then I asked myself, 'How could I know him? This person is young.' I cried every morning because I had this sorrow. It's the sorrow of time.... Even today when I go back to Chile, I feel disconnected ... what I remember is not there anymore. The place where I was born, it's not there anymore. There are tall buildings; there are malls everywhere.

Eliana sadly shook her head and said that her home was now the United States: 'The Chile of my memory doesn't exist.'

Some memories triggered by Eliana's narrative

As a witness to her narrative, I had become flooded with memories of certain events that I thought I had forgotten, and was now surprised by my own intense feelings of fear and horror.

Temuco, Chile, 1987

> As I lay in bed I listened to the sounds of dogs barking, the wind rustling leaves in the trees outside my house, and small animals running on the roof. Fearful that these noises announced the arrival of the secret police, I rehearsed what I was going to say to them, how I was going to beg them not to hurt me. I was afraid I would become another *desaparecido* (one of the 'disappeared' who had been tortured and killed by the regime, but whose body was never found). I feared being tortured and killed for things I hadn't done.

The fear expressed in this personal recollection was precipitated by an odd event that had happened that morning at an open-air market. A woman, whose face seemed vaguely familiar, had walked quickly towards me and said: 'When they come to get you, you need to shout your name loud and clear, so we know when they have come to get you.' Before I could respond, she quickly merged with the crowd and I lost sight of her. I was bewildered by her message. By 'they', it was clear to me that she had meant the CNI – the Centro Nacional de Información (National Information Centre), a government intelligence service whose officers had the duty of finding anti-government activists. People detained by the CNI normally disappeared, with no record of the arrest.

In spite of my bewilderment, and my anger with this woman, I recognised her desire to help me. I wanted to tell her that she was wrong, that I was not a terrorist, that I had not done anything wrong. The woman's message made me realise that people in Temuco believed the rumour circulating about me – that I was a member of an anti-government movement training the Mapuche, the largest indigenous group in Chile, in guerrilla warfare. I wondered at how quickly a baseless rumour – that was so preposterous I laughed when I first heard it – had made me a suspect.

Second stage of the making of Eliana's map: the creation of images

My creation of the first images was a response to Eliana's oral narrative, whose words, gestures and emotions had triggered memories and images in myself. For oral historian Richard Candida Smith, the oral narrative of a memory is a performance that is more than just words. It communicates to the interlocutor images and meanings that go beyond the words and are carried over to other memories and archives (Smith 2009). Memories are, for Smith, activated for both the performer and the listener in the process of performing and responding. And this process is continuous.

I kept thinking about my sleepless nights in Chile, and events that I witnessed that filled me with terror. As I had listened to Eliana recount her memories, I recognised in myself feelings similar to those she had described when she herself had been ready to accept what charges the government placed on her and asked to be forgiven just out fear: fear for her life, for her children and for her husband. I realised that I had archived in my body my own sensations of horror, fear and danger from my experiences under the Pinochet dictatorship. As a witness of a narrative of trauma, my body recognised these past sensations I had chosen to forget, which in turn triggered these memories, or sense memories (Bennett 2005).

The point of entrance to the creation of the first images was my emotional immersion in Eliana's narrative, which I complemented by reading published accounts of victims of the regime. The first image, a nude woman lying on the ground, emerged after recalling Eliana's words: 'You feel like an animal that they are chasing ... I had always wanted to have children, and this was the only time in my life when I regretted it.' Eliana said these words when she described what she felt was the worst time of her exile, when she stayed by herself with her small children, and while Fernando was hiding at a friend's house. I drew the image of nude woman lying on the ground with her knees bent as if she was protecting herself from beatings. As Gilles Deleuze (2005) has pointed out, the artist paints not the body as an

object, but what is being experienced; in other words, the sensation is what is being painted, in this case the sensations that I felt and imagined that Eliana had experienced and my own feelings of fear. After contemplating my first drawing, I realised how I could represent Eliana's other emotions expressed during the course of her journey of exile. In addition to Eliana's sense of defeat, I identified a feeling of relief and hope at the point that Fernando had left Chile and she prepared to join him, of happiness when she arrived in Berkeley, and of pride in obtaining the job that provided her family and her permanent residency in the United States. I felt that these emotions could be represented symbolically in the movement of the woman standing up from a prone position to a fully erect figure.

The second image I drew was of a woman with one knee on the ground but in the process of standing up, to represent Eliana's time just prior to leaving Chile. The third image was of a woman standing proud and strong, representing Eliana's life in exile, and was influenced by my memory of the sculpture *Standing Woman* by Gaston Lachaise (1932) which I would see regularly at UCLA's Murphy Sculpture Garden. The statue's magnificent strength and size inspired awe in me every time I walked by it in the garden.

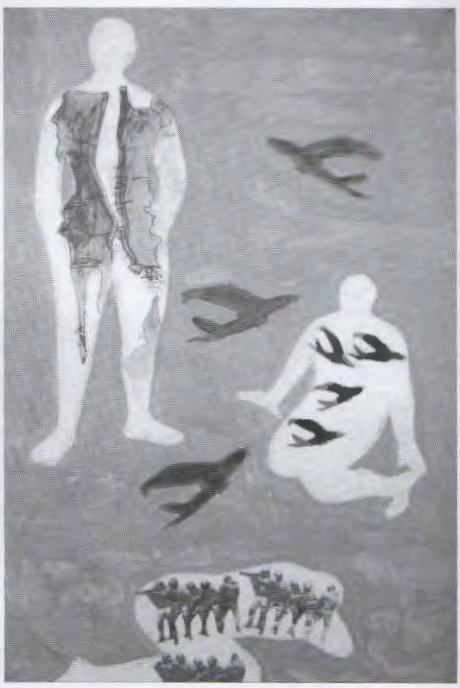
These three images led to a tripartite visual layout. At the bottom of the page, I located a prone body; in the middle, a semi-crouching body; and at the top, the image of a standing victorious woman. The female body would be the vessel to carry Eliana's story, and three different

38 · First image for Eliana's map

39 · Second image for Eliana's map

body movements were used to express the sentiments associated with her migratory journey.

I called Eliana to discuss the images. This was the first of several conversations I had with her that served to confirm my understanding of her stories and balance out my emotional immersion. I explained that her emotional display had influenced my decision to use her body as a vessel to tell her story, and I wanted to know if she accepted the idea for the layout of her journey. After I described the layout, there was a silence on the phone, and then she quietly said 'yes'. When I asked her for suggestions about filling in the outlines of the bodies, she suggested that her prone body should be filled with images of soldiers, to convey the dictatorship and her immediate fear; for her intermediate state, we both agreed on airplanes; and for her image in the United States, she suggested using images representing her life in the United States and in Chile. She was not sure which images she should use and



40 · Eliana's map: version one

had difficulties visualising the complete picture. I said I would bring her some images as a starting point and that we could discuss them in our next meeting. We agreed to meet for a second time.

Before the meeting, I created three monoprints using stencils and photo-image transfers. I created a stencil of the outline of a woman lying on the ground, to represent Eliana's time in Chile after the *coup d'état*. I transferred the image from a newspaper photograph of a Chilean soldier in full combat gear using blue gum Arabic and etching ink. I repeated this process until I filled the body with several soldiers in position ready to attack (see Figure 38).

For the second image, a woman in the act of standing up, I repeated the process but in this case I filled the body with images of airplanes created from stencils, to convey her exit from Chile (see Figure 39).

For the third image I created a picture of a strong woman standing proudly. I divided her body vertically and on one side of the body I placed a map of California and on the other a map of Chile, as a way of representing Eliana's two places of belonging (see Figure 40).

Third stage of the making of Eliana's map: review session

We met for a second time to look at the photographs. Eliana had spent a week poring over hundreds of photographs she had found in boxes and had not seen for several years. She was excited. Her cheeks were red and her eyes were shining. She immediately pulled me to a couch facing a coffee table covered with several shoe boxes full of photographs and neat piles of others she had taken out. Touching my hand, she described the way viewing the photographs had engaged her imagination by transporting her to the past: 'I loved going over these photos. They were in boxes, forgotten. Each has its own memories that were released when I looked at them. I have rarely looked at these photos. I had to look at each one of them, and this act made me remember so many things.' After a while, Eliana became quiet and reflective. 'I don't belong to any country,' she said.

Feeling her sadness, and with a desire to distract her and bring her back to her initial enthusiasm, I showed Eliana the images I had created. 'What do you think?' I asked her nervously. She nodded when she looked at the first two images, depicting herself lying down and in a crouching position. 'Yes,' she said pensively. Worried that the images were not what she expected, I asked, 'Do you think that they represent your experience?' 'Yes, yes,' she said, crying.

After a while, I showed her the image of herself standing with the two maps dividing her body. She contemplated the image, shook her head, and said, 'No, I don't want this. You should fill it with images of my family and my friends. This is what really matters in my life: my

41 • Eliana's map: version two

country is my family and friends.' She explained that the juxtaposition of seeing her past in photographs and then seeing her image standing with the maps of Chile and California had made her reflect on what mattered in her life. As she contemplated the image I had created of her, she said that this was the image of someone who lives in two worlds and she did not like this idea. She said that the visualisation of her memories had made her appreciate her connection to family and friends more strongly than her connection to a specific place. 'I saw what matters in my life. Countries don't matter,' she said.

'I want you to use my photos,' she said, pointing at them on the coffee table. Eliana showed me the photographs she had gathered, depicting her at several important events: smiling at her graduation from the School of Economics, with her professor by her side; her wedding to Fernando Kusnetzoff; at work as a researcher with her colleagues in the Institute of Economics and Planning of the Catholic University; as a new mother with her newborn baby. Other photographs showed Eliana with her parents and with her young children. I explained to her that we could not use all of the several dozens of photographs she had gathered, because there was limited space on the map. She looked disappointed. Realising how important these images were to her, I promised her that I would use them in her video.

I asked her to choose only the most important photographs to fill the outline of her body standing, to depict her life in the United States. She chose those of her wedding, her family and best friend, and of herself, taken the day she became an American citizen.

I asked Eliana to choose the places in the outline image of her body for each one of the photographs. Without hesitation she selected the location of her heart to place the photographs of her wedding, her grandson, children, parents and friends. Realising that it would be impossible to place all these images in one place, she narrowed her selection down to her wedding and her grandson. She chose to fill her arms with the images of her sons, parents and best friend. For the rest of the body, she chose images of her wearing a costume when she became a US citizen, on Halloween day (see Figure 41).

Towards the end of this meeting, Eliana reflected further on her identity and place of belonging. 'I don't belong to any country,' she repeated. I was surprised at this, since during our first visit she had declared her place of belonging to be the United States. I was struck by this new declaration. Throughout the eighteen-month period of meetings to discuss and work on this project, and while viewing the exhibit, Eliana expressed different places of belonging and different identities. Repeated interactions with images from the past, and the creation of new images over this period, had compelled Eliana to contemplate and imagine her own place of belonging and identity.

Throughout the creation of this installation, the exiles recalled memories which were subsequently often revised by the images I created. Or sometimes the images brought new memories, or the

images were rejected and changed for a better and more just representation of the past (Degarrod 2013). The plasticity of art allowed visual imaging of the past and the collaborative aspect of the project provided for the social sharing of these memories.

Note

1 During the early years of Augusto Pinochet's regime lists of enemies of the state were announced on the radio and in newspapers. People listed were to present themselves voluntarily at the nearest police station.

5 · *Boru-vedak* (a work of lies): looking for Libeskind in *Sri Lanka*

James Thompson

In 2009 I attended a lecture on architecture at the University of Manchester delivered by Professor Simon Guy. During the post-talk discussion, the renowned architect Daniel Libeskind was mentioned. Famous internationally for winning the competition to design the reconstruction of the Ground Zero site in Manhattan, he was particularly well known in this part of the UK for designing the Imperial War Museum North, in Salford Quays, a few miles from where the lecture was taking place. A friend turned to me at this point and asked whether I knew that Libeskind had been involved in rebuilding houses destroyed by the 2004 tsunami in Sri Lanka. She knew of my work in that country and thought the link would provide food for thought. It did.

I emailed Studio Libeskind in search of more information but received no reply. I thought my interest was stalled, but then I had two pieces of luck. First, I found and downloaded the full Studio Libeskind plans from the internet, including designs for the houses, maps of the whole environment and outlines of additional buildings, and printed them off in colour. Second – the location: I knew it well. It was a small village in the south-west of the island, known to tourists and countless NGO workers as an ideal holiday destination or weekend break, with a beautiful beach in a calm lagoon-like bay. Another piece of luck was a planned visit to Sri Lanka in July 2009. This would be a side project from the main purpose of the trip, but the questions that it prompted encouraged me. I was not sure that this was research, perhaps more investigative journalism: *I was looking for Libeskind in Sri Lanka.*

The pictures presented on the DVD accompanying this volume are the story of that search in the village of Unawatuna – where there were no visible signs of Libeskind. As a form of awkward compensation, I gave his designs to people who lived at the sites where the houses should have been. I did not find Libeskind but I wanted to leave something of him behind – evidence of a humanitarian architectural gesture. Of course, architects *design* buildings, they do not *build* them, so it is wrong to be critical: Libeskind's architectural commitment to Sri Lanka had been completed. Humanitarianism had had its performance.

SOUND

6 · The saving face of death: anthropology and the scene of knowing

Paul Carter

Are you listening? Look at me

In general, anthropologists have sought to make face-to-face contact with their human subjects. A certain *visagéité* underwrites the truthfulness of the human contract involved in handing over information about what is happening. Even where the researcher elects to become a participant in the social rituals observed, he or she rarely casts off, or seeks to shed, an outsider status. This, it may be well understood, is a functional mask the hosting community bestows on scientists – as a go-between with the outside world, they can have strategic value. Sometimes, researchers 'go native', suspending disbelief in the final report of changed states of mind and the seeming efficacy of magic or committing themselves to respect the secrecy of what has been shared. Whether turning alternately towards and away from, or growing exclusively transfixed by, the other's gaze, much more than a search for clarification informs the anthropological covenant with the other. A mimetic desire is inscribed in the exchange, whose meaning remains obscure. The classic image of the colonialist ethnographer with recording device surrounded by a semi-circle of child-like native informants is a far cry from the diverse permutations of engagement, identification and transference that influence contemporary anthropological recording practices, and which cause them to diffuse beyond the boundaries of a formal description into more self-conscious forms of fiction that confront the ethical question knowledge transfer poses aesthetically, through the making of emotionally compelling sound compositions, video documentaries and multimedia installations.

Multisensory anthropologies respond to a recognition of the recursivity of knowledge, and seek to inscribe the subject position of the observer into the social text being written. They acknowledge that the description of structuring features is motivated by a desire that it is not licit to express, a wish to stage a confrontation with the Real. Accounts of heterogeneous vitality have subtly inscribed into them the face of Death. Yet even when these radical horizons of interpersonal knowability

are posed in the encounter, the scene of information remains purposeful, in term of its agenda at least. However mimetic the masks worn, the inquirer into the logics of other cultures assumes a meeting place, a provisional site of translatability, and cues their inquiry accordingly. A certain normalisation of communication occurs, enabling critical decisions to be made about the narratability of the culture under investigation. Generally, the greater intimacy sought in multisensory anthropologies is intended to magnify the field of experience from which meaningful data can be extracted. The attention of the observer is intensified as she or he consciously attends to the non-verbal aspects of communication but the self-awareness stimulated in this way remains instrumentally attuned to the detection of structuring patterns that underwrite praxis theoretically.

In the following meditation, the proposition of a non-face-to-face encounter is developed. The aim of this speculation is to bring into view what these multisensory anthropologies may still relegate to the background, the relay between text and context or, more concretely, listening and architecture. Already, to re-pose the conventional interpretative technique that locates the meaning of an intentional act in its social setting as research into the relationship between listening and architecture is to propose a transposition of the anthropological *mise-en-scène* of information-gathering to disciplinary locations more usually identified with, respectively, a phenomenological philosophy or a contemporary Western sociology. There is an important tradition in the ontology of hearing that perceives in the distinctive feedback between hearing and listening a different, non-visualist foundation of knowledge. Here, listening is represented as a suspension of the symbolic hunger associated with hearing; listening may be an erotic inclination to take account of the 'overload of pleasure' secreted in the semiotic's rhythms (to adapt Kristeva's vocabulary) (Kristeva 1977: 74; see also Starr 1995: 143) or, more broadly, a pre-semiotic openness to noise. In contrast to symbolic discourses, composed of signifying chains, the discourse of listening, if it can be put this way, is whatever there is in the field of the hearer that is overheard, the supplement of the auditory environment that even the immersive investigation of the multisensory anthropologist has, as a matter of semiotic economy, to eliminate from her or his system of exchange.

The suggestion here is that the environment of the overheard has distinct characteristics – we may say a design. That is, certain locations are better adapted to overhearing than others. The poetic *locus classicus* of this recognition is Ovid's account of the afterlife of Echo, whose auditory *sparagmos* leads her to take up residence in caves, grottos, hollows – in short, all resonant localities adapted to the reflection of sound. In this context, more important than the notionally neutral meeting place where the anthropologist and the native informant convene may be the walls that stand reflectively nearby. Consistent with their narrative drive to make sense of things, even anthropological reports recast in the 'beyond text' format of video, sound composition or installation fail to attend to the setting of the setting. While much detail may be conveyed about the aporias in communication, these being fetishised as a source of the

anthropologist's abjection, a necessary initiation rite if any authentic encounter is to be had, the construction of the physical environment that renders certain sites propitious for exchange is not noticed. Architecture, or at least the correlation between social behaviour and physical spaces, is a recognised context of sociological investigation, but in anthropological discourse the echo-locational *chora* of communication remains largely silent, unelicited and chaotic. Unless it understudies eloquence, it is disregarded. The idea that walls might listen, and overhearing what is being said, not just here but elsewhere, be sites for the composition of a different story of what is happening – this is an interpellation beyond what is called for.

In the remarks that follow, the scene of listening is characterised through a re-evaluation of the wall. In anthropological discourse, and the social sciences generally, the wall is conceived theatrically as the container of certain symbolic actions (the social text). Instrumentalised as an actor in these events insofar as it signifies the *arche* of architecture – its power to regulate human contact and communication – the wall is in this conception faceless, depthless and purely positive, that is, lacking any space of negativity (the hollow, the grotto) where another communication or politics might be incubated. The re-evaluated wall is the site of whispering, a gathering place of echoes and the privileged haunt of the one who overhears. It is the place where the lover is, but also where the lover is aware of himself or herself listening to the other. The wall in this scene is inscribable, and may register the primary *écriture* recording the longed-for, but not to be confessed, confrontation with the Real. In a poem dedicated to 'the wall of a hospital of blood', the Spanish Civil War poet Miguel Hernandez wrote, 'If a man goes towards the hospitals joyfully, / they change into gardens of half-opened wounds', and the 'bloodstained doors' in front of the surgery room change into 'flowering oleanders' (Hernandez 1972). The writing on the wall is the whispering script of an architectural *aporia*, a building whose walls have ways in but no ways out except one.

These *are* only remarks, a juxtaposition of suggestive testimonies, as a developed account of the role of listening and architecture in a reconfigured theory of communicational desire needs more space than is available here. The three instances discussed below are heterogeneous enough – some comments on the libretto and scenography for Luciano Berio's music theatre work *La Vera Storia*; the staging of the conditions of self-knowing in the *Phaedrus*; and some miscellaneous speculations about the *visagéité* of the wall. To bring them into dialogue with one another is to stage a kind of listening that attends to overlooked echoes. Their association is not entirely fanciful – anthropological resonances are obvious. Berio was a musical structuralist: when we worked on a treatment of the Ulysses myth, his first theoretical port of call was Vladimir Propp; a Lévi-Straussian elision of function and form characterises his work. A Saussurean semiotics applied to the elucidation of power structures creates in *La Vera Storia* a scenography where the interdependence of meeting place and wall is dramatised. The negative potential of the latter to counteract its positive identification with the prison and to serve as the conscience of the people emerges. The *mise-en-*

scène of the *Phaedrus* could, without undue distortion, be read as an anthropological primer laying down the rules of conduct advisable in exchanges with native informants. Its overt preoccupation with the Delphic injunction 'Know thyself' may be indiscreet in what has purported to be an objective science, but the recognition of the erotic impulse informing the discourse with, and of, the other remains exemplary – there is always another listening in on the conversation being staged, desiring to make sense of it. To bring these themes together in an observation about walls as listening structures, as architectural organs of a self-knowing that others the self, I connect the dialogue in the *Phaedrus* to Plutarch's dialogue on the inscriptions at Delphi and notice that a Levinasian ethics of the face to face can be transposed from the human face to the face of architecture. The sensation of listening in, of overhearing and being overheard, subtly relocates the encounter with the other, suggesting that interpellation is not only symbolic but choreographic.

It's here the wall. No one says anything

In the confrontation between the 'doubles', Ivo and Luca, in Berio *La Vera Storia* ('The True Story', a collaboration with Italo Calvino as librettist), Ivo stands for tyranny, Luca for political freedom. Their scenographic counterpart is the opening set – 'an empty piazza at high noon; in the back of the stage a solemn white building which seems loaded with history' – and the opening scene – a festa ('In the festa there is everything.... The city is only festa') brutally cut short by a public execution (Calvino 1977: 1). In a repetition of this first arrested action, Ivo has Luca imprisoned, a development that the Ballad-Singer interprets as proof that any search for 'an initial condition of harmony' in the past is doomed to fail; what we find as we go back 'from one origin to another' is a 'view that is surely no better than the one promised us' (Calvino 1977: 10). The dialectic between tyranny and freedom, between 'the city' Ivo holds in his power and the city of the festa, between the white building and piazza is, Calvino suggests, constitutional. The symbol of this schizophrenic political environment is the prison – the white building or, for the purposes of stagecraft (and perhaps statecraft as well), the metonymic expression of this, the white wall at the back of the stage, spattered with the blood of the executed prisoner, that stands in for the white building. More than the metaphysical prison behind the scenes – which by a series of baroque sleights of hand can morph into the scene of earthly life itself – the wall is a fissure in reality that poses the constitution of the Real.

Bearing the *écriture* of violent death – the blood splatters that only a revolutionary can interpret as 'flowering oleanders' – it bears dissident witness to tyrannical power's erasure of otherness. It illustrates what Roland Barthes, in an essay on Philippe Sollers's *H*, referred to as 'the plural solution':

> The aporia, the logical contradiction, which it avoids is that normally, in order to scour, you need a scouring language, which in its turn becomes a new coat of paint. Hence the

> plural solution: using the cracks of language to produce on the wall (the screen, the page) of representation, a number of multiple stains, bizarre sketches, cracking.... (Barthes 2001: 76–77)

In this case, though, the wall is not merely a surface for writing: it is a place of inscription, the trace of a historical event. It bears witness to what the eyewitness cannot witness – the criminal act of murder, say, that can only be overheard and communicated by those not in the direct line of fire, out of sight. As a diaphragm stretched between the visible and the invisible, the wall solicits another sensory witnessing. The prison is a political positivity, its abjection of the ego dialectically twinned with the ego's sovereignty outside. The wall does not merely mediate this allocation of selfhood: it diffuses it, breaking down the binary oppositionalism. It rebels against its own subjection to the cause of power. In his first prison speech, Luca explains, 'Perhaps I always bore / this prison within myself. / And yet these are real walls, / and beyond these walls I hear a roar / of a crowd that will not disperse. / I prick up my ears and a song reaches me' (Calvino 1977: 19). The wall is not the prison; nor is it the echo of the self. Recouping silence, the wall makes room for another mode of communication via the voice of the many, which, already dispersed, like Echo, does not reconvene as a single voice in order to be overheard, but breaks into song.

The moment of breaking into song must be every field anthropologist's dream but also nightmare. It dissolves the carefully extended terrain of symbolic gains back into the semiotic surf of sound as such. At a certain point the seemingly attentive and rational other apostrophises one out of sight or appears to channel a melody inaudible to the Western listener. Or there is a clapping of hands and the slow mobilisation of the group moving to a rhythm, in the grip of an enunciation whose expression is so completely woven into the performance that it seems to defy any kind of interpretation except a one-to-one reproduction – or the listener's participation. What is suspended in this passage – this reintegration of reason into passion – is not only the theatral space of communicative logic but the temporal economy that supported it. Now, in the performance, there is no time to transcribe what is happening; any transcription, except that directly embodied in a real-time mimesis, is not merely difficult but deathlike. The observer who returns intact from such ecstatic interludes to transcribe recordings writes posthumously. A simulacrum of the lived event published in film or sound immortalises the passing. It embodies a kind of death wish. Nostalgia for time past is symptomatic of non-plural solutions. Investing listening with power, the musical event changes the import of relating. In what passes lies the passion – as Antonio Machado wrote in one of the *Soledades*, 'Calmly, the fountain went on with its tale – no trace of the story, just the clear pain' (Machado 2002: 13).

Reintegrating pathos into ethos, the irruption of song – or, rather, a willingness to listen to what the wall relates – commences the ruination of the mirror state that beleaguers attempts at reform.[1] The piazza, the festa that does not merely fill it but substitutes a new order for its containing walls, risks becoming another kind of prison, one in which democracy speaks differently about the same authorities. Berio and

Calvino understand this. They ironise this illusion of omniscient access to the truth of representations. Luca's words are passed around like a ball in a game. They fly from mouth to mouth: his murderous brother, enemy and double, Ivo, echoes them. So does the Chorus. They ironise the discourse of the piazza, its democratic illusion.[2] Allegory is the language of the agora, the other-speak of persuasion. It moves by a kind of psychomotor chain reaction. The meeting place is not a meeting place, although the people assemble there. The rhetorical gymnastic, the mobilisation of echoes, stages the movement of becoming but nothing changes. According to Nietzsche:

> Every enhancement of life enhances man's power of communication, as well as his power of understanding. Empathy with the souls of others is originally nothing moral, but a physiological susceptibility to suggestion: 'sympathy' or what is called 'altruism' is merely a product of that psychosomatic rapport which is reckoned a part of spirituality (induction psycho-motrice, Charles Fere thinks). One never communicates thoughts: one communicates movements, mimic signs, which we then trace back to thoughts. (Quoted by Vattimo 1993: 101)

Part of the intelligence of the staging of *La Vera Storia* is, in the form of the white wall waiting to be scrubbed clean to confront the audience with a materialisation of the proscenium arch, to visualise the illusion of something happening that in the end makes no difference, unless it is to *épater le bourgeoisie*.

This is anthropological theatre: recuperating the allegorical discourse long fled from the agora, it stages a confrontation with the limits of representation that is clearly at heart political. Omar Swartz, who defends the idea that, in ancient and modern democracies alike, public spaces have been conceived of as places of free speech, and therefore of enlarged self-possession, asserts, 'Rhetoric is, first and foremost, an invitation to change' (Swartz 1998: 7). In this case, an ethics of change is proposed that works with walls, rather than against them. This shift of attention is not a simple, even fashionable, anti-Oedipal substitution of plurivocality for obedience to his master's voice. It may be anti-democratic. At any rate it poses at the heart of the agora the enigma of meeting, the contract of trust. If the recuperation of a primary sociality – the metaphysical project at the heart of anthropology and in whose pursuit the multisensory enrichment of method is advocated – is not to produce instead a manifestation of one of Elias Canetti's murderous crowds – why should others be *nice*? – then protocols of meeting need to be improvised. Tellingly, Canetti's own experience of identification with the mob expressed itself *musically*: there was 'something rhythmic in the air, an evil music. You could call it music: you felt elevated by it. I did not feel as if I were moving on my own legs. I felt as if I were in a resonant wind' (Canetti 1983: 248).[3] Hence, alternative passages to the other will not be naïve 'first contact' rituals but traditional, choreographic or architectonic attempts to keep in play the possibility of other outcomes. Here the aporia, or blockage to understanding, represented by the inclination to listen to the clear pain with no trace of story, may discover a relational architecture – one in which, for example, walls, instead of being instruments of power preventing free access to the other, were reflective places where

what passed was held, diffused and otherwise returned with interest to the public domain. The goal of the revolutionary crowd converges on that of the revolutionary hero: it is the removal of walls. The third way of anthropological emancipation, where the political returns to the ethical, aims to be not without walls but *without the walls – extra muros*, as Socrates is when, with Phaedrus, he glides out of the city and crosses the Ilyssus to sit at the foot of a plane tree, 'a fair resting place, full of summer sounds and scents' (Plato, *Phaedrus*: 107).[4]

Not merely to cross the Ilyssus, but to conduct a conversation in earshot of water. To plunge, that is, the hermeneutic plot, an ever ramifying net of alternative interpretations laid out on an abstract ground, into the purling, rising and falling gurgle of vocalic passages here and there hollowed out by glottal stones into pulses beginning to resemble sense. Sense here, in the rhythmo-melodic fluvial processor, comes from the senses, not from the reconciliation of different symbolic connotations (senses). To listen, to be conscious of the water's dreamy warbling, is not simply to orchestrate the rhetorical effectiveness of reason but to derive meaning differently – from the senses, erotically. 'Ed i miei sensi erano li ad ascoltarlo,' writes Pasolini in 'Una disperata vitalita': 'compivo un atto d'amore, / ma i miei sensi stavano ad ascoltare.'[5] To listen to sex is to hear the echo of solitude, the distance from which, 'nella grotta perduta', the one confronted with death enters for a moment – in a way that parallels Ivo's experience in prison – 'i giorni immensi di carnevale … la vita dei secoli' (Bellezza 1981: 123). The auditory intelligence evoked here, the sense of the senses, is the same Socrates invokes when he criticises the efforts of mythographers to understand the myths allegorically. Attempts to rationalise myths according to the rules of probability 'take up a great deal of time', Socrates remarks; 'I have no leisure for such enquiries, shall I tell you why? I must first know myself, as the Delphian inscription says; to be curious about that which is not my concern, while I am still in ignorance of my own self, would be ridiculous' (Plato, *Phaedrus*: 106).

This remark is made in passing on the way to the plane tree, where Phaedrus will read a transcript of the speech he has just heard Lycias give at the house of Morychus – a speech comparing the vices of lovers unfavourably with the virtues characteristic of non-lovers. As Phaedrus and Socrates address each other like lovers, the textual exactitude of Phaedrus's repetition is highly ironic – as if a lover cannot be trusted to tell the truth. Despite defining his vocation as the pursuit of self-knowledge, Socrates is seduced by Phaedrus's recitation into a speech of surpassing eloquence – 'Listen to me, then, in silence; for surely the place is holy; so that you must not wonder, if, as I proceed, I appear to be in a divine fury, for already I am getting into dithyrambics' (*Phaedrus*: 114) – at the end of which he realises that he has spoken for a bad reason – and has reasoned badly. He feels it would be better to say no more, and is about to cross the Ilyssus and make his way back to Athens when, he reports, 'the usual sign was given to me, the sign which always forbids, but never bids, me to do anything which I am going to do; and I thought that I heard a voice saying in my ear that I had been guilty of impiety, and that I must not go away until I had made an

atonement' (*Phaedrus*: 118). The son of Aphrodite is the god he has disrespected. If Eros is Socrates's alter ego, he has perjured himself. He has avoided self-knowledge:

> Only think, my good Phaedrus, what an utter want of delicacy was shown in the two discourses; I mean, in my own and in that which you recited out of the book. Would not anyone who was himself of a noble and gentle nature, and who loved or ever had loved a nature like his own, when he heard us speaking of the petty causes of lovers' jealousies ... have imagined that our ideas of love were taken from some haunt of sailors to which good manners were unknown...? (*Phaedrus*: 120)

Here is the crux of this majestic work, where the Delphic inscription, the writing on the wall, is animated, and, transposed from a visual apprehension to an auditory one, begins to work a new knowledge. Two boundaries are crossed here. As the poet Martin Harrison points out in a brilliant but unpublished reading, the Delphic phrase is a signifier of the limits of writing. It is an inscription that begs the question of the relationship between inscription (writing, text) and truth. Observing that Socrates says that he must obey the injunction and that as yet he is unable to do so, Harrison writes that 'the inscription sets up a further zone, a zone of truth which is still to be acquired' (Harrison c.1990: 70). He offers a genealogy for this inscription which preserves (at the origin of writing as it were) 'a total collusion between writing and revelation such that ... nothing else can be "said" to be occurring between writerly expression and revelatory clarity' (Harrison c.1990: 70). Out of the paroxysms of the priestess, the lurking presence of the serpent Pytho, the noise of the underground stream and the voices of the 'prophetes' interpreting (already interpreting!) the priestess's shuddering movements and echolalic utterances – out of this theatre falls 'a little statement, a little piece of writing' (Harrison c.1990: 70). This reading is a rebuke to mythographers – not to mention contemporary critical theorists who interpret the *Phaedrus* without regard for the time of the speeches, the auditory attachments that counterpoint and punctuate them. It also applies to anthropologists who fail to read in writing the limits of what can be said, who disregard, that is, the erotic contract underwritten by listening. In the writing-on-the-wall logos, the language of reason, remains capitalised as Logos, the Word. In this older role, logos and mythos, language and mouthing or story-telling, have not been torn apart. Logos retains its spiritual – its dynamic – power. It can be compared to the Old Testament concept of *dabhar*, a narrative whose key quality is that it 'wants to be heard ... taken in, internalised ... "obeyed"' (Zuurmond 1996: 11–27). A *dabhar* ceases to be the Word, becoming instead mere words, when it falls on deaf ears.

The first boundary recuperated here is architectonic – it is the wall as the site that stages the act of self-knowing. If the 'Know thyself' tag enjoyed exceptional authority, this was derived from the physical location, and from the drama of self-awareness that unfolded when the devotee, on the brink of passing into the dark heart of the oracle, confronted a speaking wall that admonished him to see the 'truth', the revelation he imagined lying concealed beyond the wall, as lying, in reality, *in front* of the wall, in the reflective state coeval with reading. To know thyself might be to see traced

out in letters before him the wall borne within. And this self-knowledge would be conveyed all the more dramatically if the inscription in question bore an enigmatic meaning. 'Know thyself' marks the limit of what can be inscribed, because a wall is its limit. A wall at a particular place is the precondition for – perhaps even the reason for – its being written. It is meaningful because of its appearance there. Its meaning is enigmatic for the same reason. In front of its inscrutable design, there opens up a silence in which the sound of the underground stream becomes audible; and you become aware of an environment that listens to you, that knows you are there already, and in whose echoic warblings, slurs and rumblings something about the self is being communicated.

The second boundary is both topographical and sensory: it is the injunction not to recross the Ilyssus back into the territory of textuality, and the rededication of Socrates to listening. Harrison translates the passage quoted above differently: 'just conceive [of both of our speeches] being *overheard* [my emphasis] by some gentleman' (Harrison c.1990: 92).[6] Twice Socrates invokes the organ of hearing to signal a break with the habits of writing. Displays of forensic brilliance are kinds of spoken writing, monologues deaf to the incursions of other voices. Socrates's desire is to let listening back into speaking. As those speeches denied Eros, his penance will involve a different way of writing and speaking, one that acknowledges – pays homage to – the doubleness of being present to oneself, what is called self-knowledge. For Harrison, the event of the voice is 'quite at odds with the theorist's network of writings and spaces and disappearing traits, here is a network of metaphors, poetic quotations and rituals: a signal, a voice, a listening, a stream, a purification in water' (Harrison c.1990: 91). They are bound by the potentiality of listening: 'Phaedrus is listening, the nymphs, the "god of love," the spirits of the place, Socrates himself, Socrates's "prophetic soul"... Listening, they perceive that they hear and they are heard' (Harrison c.1990: 92). Harrison writes:

> the ultimate modal limit on the conduct of both is the factor of 'being heard' by another homosexual lover. The modal zone – the zone in which the energetics of writing and speaking, of the memorialisation of script and truth-telling, of the proper conduct of concepts no less than of the proper conduct of sexual relations will be worked out – is a zone of an eroticised and indeed homo-eroticised audibility. (Harrison c.1990: 92)

Discovered extramurally, it might be supposed that the wall has no role in this pastorale. But that is because the echoic origin of walls has been forgotten. Walls of sound also exist. In fact, the resistance of sound to interpretation, which inscribes distance and solitude into acts of meeting, including the sexual act, is as dense as anything the mason imagines. Socrates is not in pursuit of a knowledge still to be acquired. He is not an interpreter, forever divining signs of the ineffable within the material order. He is not trying to storm walls. He is interested in the relationship between the wall within and the wall without. Knowledge of this becomes available when two people talk to each other, but only if the interlocutors are lovers. The

difference between non-lovers and lovers is not simply that the former employ a Habermasian communicative logic that is anti-erotic while the latter are prone to a poetic mode that inscribes the ebb and flow of desire into the structure of the dialogue. It is that the latter imagine that they are overheard. By whom? By another homosexual lover, in Socrates's case, but, more generally, by one who listens to what passes between two people, gaining an insight into the ethical conditions of encounter that an axialised discourse can never reach. Transposed into architectonic terms, the overhearer is the wall, here conceived not as a construction of bricks but as an echoic hollow where the symbolic is re-immersed in a semiotic, perhaps pre-semiotic babble.

I have wondered beyond absolutes.[7] Free the refugees

Of course the acoustic properties of walls have long been understood to offer a key to the harmonics of social regulation. There is an auditory graffiti as well as a scriptural one. Thus in 1650 Marin Mersenne found that it took one second to shout *benedicam dominum* (Kahn 1990: 3–7). Then, discovering the distance from a wall where utterance and echo dovetailed, he was able to calculate the speed of sound. In *Phonurgia Nova* (1673) Athanasius Kircher described an ingenious experiment in which walls were so arranged in relation to one another that the shouted Italian expression *clamore* became re-echoed as the Italian words for 'costumes', 'love', 'hours' and finally 'king' (Rifaterre 1978: 20). These anecdotes belong equally to the history of acoustics, political science and baroque urbanism. In them, listening as well as architecture have been treated as arithmetic quantities to prove geometrical theorems. The wall is the measure of the city: walls measure out its extent and internal divisions and thoroughfares. But the ethical beginnings of this utilitarian function are forgotten. The wall is not merely the obedient slave of the ruler, understood both as the draughtsman's tool and the will of the sovereign. As an art of limits, it both anticipates and reflects the dilemmas that lie at the heart of the West's self-identification with the *polis*, conceived jointly as a city and as a democratic polity. To achieve the kind of self-knowledge associated with the exposure to others constitutive of democracy, equality and difference have to coexist. We must be both individuals and mimics, both originals and echoes. It is a formula that crucifies subjectivity, creating an intolerable, schizophrenic tension between the simultaneous preservation of limits that must be and their continuous destruction. On the one hand, it is the agoraphobic terror of being 'Without boundary where boundary should confine';[8] on the other, it is the claustrophobic longing for less confinement, for 'sensational perimeters' that are 'buoyant, uncut / Unwalled…'.[9]

To begin elsewhere, a multisensory anthropology does not go beyond the text, if that implies a further materialisation of writing, an intensification of the relationship between the writing gesture and the engraved trace. It goes in the other direction, towards song. Listening, as Harrison beautifully explains, is a state of being next to, somewhere else nearby. It does not *prescribe*:

> The erotic ear ... does not hear what Phaedrus and Socrates are talking about: it does not hear their 'writing' or, rather, it does not hear *their* 'writing.' It does not ascribe a moment of completion to the visible marks of the written text.... It hears instead what Phaedrus and Socrates (who, after all, are merely fictional characters) do not hear precisely in the fact that it hears the gaps and lapses, the improbabilities, the confused motivations, the playful distractedness of their conversation. It hears what the writer had not written. Like the lover it 'sees' things differently: a new aspect appears in the object of regard. (Harrison c.1990: 92)

Translated into architectonic terms, this is the character of Echo. The source of Echo is the wall. And the direction of this is always towards song, towards the rediffusion of speech into the crowd, the sound environment. The Eros at work here, the third person or ear, that is the ideal partner towards which the lovers both yearn, is himself elsewhere, nearby to be sure but beyond the dying echo of Kircher's *clamore* in what leaves last – the 'e' – the single syllable meaning 'be' in Italian, the same other Delphic inscription that Plutarch writes about and similarly translates.[10]

In Ivo's cell but also in the less overtly politicised *mise-en-scène* of the interview with the native informant, overhearing defines a different form of ethical encounter, one in which the environment plays a part. Emmanuel Levinas describes the ethical encounter as a face-to-face relation, 'whereby I am called into responsibility by the "naked exposure" of the face, to attend to the intrinsic demand of another' (quoted by LaBelle 2007: 12). But, Brandon LaBelle argues, this axialised face-to-face summons leaves out the environment to either side, as it were, but for whose dispersed presence the drama of 'encounter' could not be recognised. The 'geography' of speaking and listening is essential to understanding the demand of the other. An ethical gaze presupposes an 'ear ethic' – the 'one-to-one pressure, the encounter of your gaze and my voice, and the responsibility of building place, between you and me' presupposes, LaBelle suggests, 'the third body or third ear, the one sitting over there, in the wings, off-screen, out of frame; the one, that is, who *overhears* [my emphasis]' (LaBelle 2007: 14). Transposed to Ivo's case, the critic of tyranny is imprisoned because he overhears what the discourse of power suppresses. In this enterprise, the wall is a secret agent because, while it immures the rebel, it also conveys to him what can be overheard. The tyrant *qua* ego is right to be on his guard, for what the overhearer does is to steal sovereignty – associated with exclusive possession of the right to speak and be heard. Eavesdropping was a punishable offence because the eavesdropper was liable to repeat what had been overheard. Through an involuntary seduction of his sense, the speaker finds himself exposed to every kind of misinterpretation, and powerless. What the eavesdropper achieves – using the wall behind to subtly amplify the nearby conversation – is comparable to Cupid's triumph when he fires an arrow into a non-lover's heart. From that moment forwards, the non-lover becomes a lover, one, that is, whose self-possession has been stolen, one who is no longer himself but at the beck and call of another. This other is the beloved. It may be Levinas's Other. It may be the crowd. In any case: 'To overhear is to insert the ear secretly, and in doing so, to *mis*place place, to dislocate location, and to shadow the social' (LaBelle 2007: 14).

The odd fact is that to insist on the ontological relevance of the relay between hearing and listening – and between both and speaking – is to bring into emphatic focus the political implications of an enlarged multisensory anthropology that looks to go beyond the text. The heuristically convenient information bubble in which the informant and the informer sit apart in a dialectically convened discursive *Spielraum* is shattered. For what is overheard when the dry panes of the laboratory space are broken is not simply more voices but a different kind of social production. What is overheard at the wall? Is it a single voice quoted out of context? Or is it something altogether different – which eludes the proscriptions of the law – the acoustic mask, to borrow Canetti's notion, of society at large? If Eros in his primordial sense of Demiurge is the Public Worker who keeps us all the days of our lives in a ceaseless flutter, isn't what we hear when we don that mask (when we listen without any business of our own to the Brownian motion of the everyday) sex? What we hear is what the graffiti artist or the tagger commemorate with their spraycanned ejaculation FUCK HERE, the nameless public summons that makes everywhere a potential erotope, and which effortlessly folds together Socrates's bending to the will of his Delphically literate daimon and Pasolini, cultivating abjection night after night outside the walls, inside the walls of Rome, and ultimately *extra muros*, meeting his death at new Ostia next to the water? Faceless crowds, who may also be the 'gentleman' who overhears, are the erotic noise out of which the desire of change surfaces – not here a *triste tropiques* ruination of intact culture brought about by Westernisation (of which the anthropologist is adjutant), but an erotic impulse to reconfigure the meeting place as a site of political renewal.

Groups, as well as individuals, have acoustic masks, unique discursive signatures of which they are unaware but which give them away. However, to discern them, and what lies beneath them, you have to be an eavesdropper: you need to listen with, paradoxically, a suspension of your own desire for order. When the conversation of two, or three or four people was overheard, Canetti wrote as follows of the Viennese café conversations of his youth:

> The interplay among them produced the most surprising effects. The voices paid no attention to one another; each started off in its own way and proceeded undeviatingly like clockwork, but when you took them all together, the strangest thing happened; it was as though you had a special key, which opened up an overall effect unknown to the voices themselves. (Canetti 2011: 262)

The eavesdropper who hears this 'overall effect' possesses the 'erotic ear' Harrison ascribes to the 'gentleman', who does not hear what Socrates and Phaedrus talk about, but hears instead what they do not hear. But the moral drawn is very different. What Canetti hears is a premonition of the murderous crowd, the crowd made up of individuals who, having overcome their fear of seizure and incorporation, are turned into an (in)human wall that breaks down every other wall standing in its path. What can withstand this wall against walls? It can only be the wall with a conscience, the wall that overhears what is here. Such a wall, like the erotic ear, is open to anything.

Politically, it corresponds to Canetti's 'vision of total and self-transcending opening to otherness, combined with a radical rejection of power: "To become a city, a country, a continent, without conquering anything"' (Arnarson and Roberts 2004: 120). Has such a city existed? According to Plutarch, Sparta's law-giver, Lycurgus, intended that his city should not conquer and rule other cities. In the same spirit, 'To those who proposed to build a wall around Sparta, Lycurgus said: "A wall of men, instead of bricks, is best"' (Plutarch n.d.). Lycurgus allegedly stipulated something else: that the laws should not be written down. In this case, the law must have been preserved in the speech of the people, a situation which demanded, if self-transcending openness to the other was to be a serious goal, a listener, an erotic ear, a wall that bore witness to an 'overall effect'.

The listening wall placed throughout culture, between people and around them, inverts the figure–ground conception of the agora as a place where the enfranchised assemble. The agora is sometimes defined as the human assembly instead. Either way, though, the passages, the accumulating arabesques of avoidance that characterise the attitude of overhearing, breaking off and recombining, these shavings, as it were, of the rhetorical choreography, remain disregarded. In this way, a recognition of the architecture of listening not only disperses the will of the earnest sophist – the anthropological *theoros*, for example – bringing home the radical implications for knowing of going beyond the text. It reinserts anthropology into discourses normally kept apart – the politics of place-making, the ethics of encounter. Much of what Levinas has written about our responsibility for the Other can be transposed to the rehabilitation of the wall in the city. But the transposition involves making a place for the one who overhears. Elsewhere I have written about the relationship of Levinas and Giacometti.

> By cultivating the absolute distance where the other disappeared, Giacometti strove to evoke what Levinas calls 'the beyond from which the face comes'. The face understood in this way is a 'visitation' – Levinas does not hesitate to call it a divinity – and its trace transcends phenomenology's interest in true appearances. According to Levinas, the distinguishing mark of the face of the other is its 'elevation' or 'height'. (Carter 2002: 198)

In the context of Giacometti's statues, hovering on the edge of sight, the full implication of Levinas's remark 'The Other is higher than I am' becomes clear. It means to glimpse in the fissure of being the totality of the divine (Carter 2002: 198). Only, the wall is not a figure. The wall does not have a face. It is, as it were, more distant from us than the face of the other. It does not address us directly: like the 'gentleman' imagined by Socrates, it overhears us.

Now, I realise, it is the concept of overhearing that explains what was missing from this interpretation – the evident motivation of Giacometti's figures to approach and to pass by one another. This is why his gaunt lordly walkers incline not towards one another but towards a void or space in-between themselves. Like giant ears, they hearken towards some message emitted from the distance. This is certainly an

erotic inclination. Farley comments that 'Eros is the instability of always reaching, never grasping.' Eros is essentially delighted by something that is absent, aroused by that which 'eludes totalisation' (Farley 1996: 69). Giacometti's sculptures are driven, rather than delighted, but their commitment to pursuing the unreachable is obvious. Reinforcing the point that Eros operates at a distance, Calamé states, 'To overcome his victim, Eros resorts to his favourite medium: not touch or caresses, but one that operates from a distance: namely, the gaze that, fixing the desired subject, now creates another subject, the one who inspires that desire' (Calamé 1999: 20). This is a variation on the idea of a mimetic desire in which the lover desires what she supposes the other desires. The 'gaze' conjured up is not another's face, it is the distance in-between and beyond. It is this displaced and dispersed desire that Giacometti's urgently stalking figures seek to fix. It is a horizon they stalk, but what they incline towards, the echo of the other they overhear, must be a wall. How, otherwise, would the distance yield an orientation that could release them from their immobility? They navigate the seeming void echo locationally.

But this appearance of self-absorption (as if Giacometti's plaza marchers wore headphones and listened to music) is also the writing on the wall, at least for a discipline that thinks it can retain its disciplinary distinctiveness when it passes outside the familiar domains of symbolic translation. What could be more ordinary, more everyday, than this sensation of being addressed, this desire that the world – always beyond us, always out of reach but returning us to ourselves should, as in a graffito, turn towards us. 'It is,' as Harrison says, 'everyday. The moment of standing somewhere else. The moment of listening' (Harrison c.1990: 83). It is constitutional of erotic identity, this ecstasis, or standing outside oneself. But what is it like? The self othered in this way cannot be a mirror image of the self. To avoid narcissism, that self must be different. In the act of reflection, unity, for example, must be given up. The identity of the ecstatic listener partakes of the nature of listening, a hearing that hears more than the transcribable part of the speech, the desire that is communicated in what cannot be said, and which manifests itself as interruption, distraction, pause and renewal. So with the new anthropology: it commences a new dialogue between politics, ethics and the worlding of cultures. Because of its initial commitment to the engagement with otherness, it continues to exercise a privileged place within the human sciences. But once, through a kind of invagination of method associated with the embrace of the multisensory, it radically incorporates the sensuous, turning the inside of repressed erotic longing into the outside of the singing group, it can no longer partition off certain subject groups from others. The object of the new philosophical anthropology is not the breakdown of what walls may remain to the full emancipation of the human spirit but the study of the walls that are everywhere; and that, to begin with, is knowing how to listen.

Notes

1 In the relevant 'revolutionary' context of the May '68 uprising in Paris, Starr discusses the inhibiting effect of a 'logic of recuperation' in which 'to oppose the Master (in specifiable ways) is merely to consolidate the Master's power' (Starr 1995: 15).

2 A stage direction late in the second act reads, 'The crowd runs, crazed; it scatters, vanishes. Searchlights explore the wall of the prison. On the sidewalks there remains a little group of poor people, who look at the building, aghast and helpless' (Calvino 1977: 42).

3 For a discussion of Canetti's treatment of the murderous crowd in *Crowds and Power* (1960), see Nye (1995: 42).

4 Martin Harrison, whose discussion of the *Phaedrus* follows, generally uses Jowett's translation. For consistency I have also used Jowett. However, in the crucial passage discussed below, the translation appears to be his own.

5 Cited with valuable observations by Dario Bellezza (1981: 122).

6 The key word in the Greek text is *akouōn*. In the original text this verb is repeated: as Hackforth (1952: 52) renders it, 'Suppose we were being listened to [*akouōn*] by a man of generous and humane character ... suppose he heard us [*akouein*] saying...'. Jowett's translation of this passage quoted above elides these two clauses, thus concealing Socrates's emphasis. Woodhouse, however, suggests that in order to give *hear* the nuance of *overhear*, Doric Greek would have added a prefix: *epakouein*, *katokouein* or, most suggestively, *parakouein* (Woodhouse 1910: 585).

7 The copy-editor queried whether 'wondered' should be 'wandered'. I found the phrase spray-canned on a wall. Was the misspelling intentional? Was it a misspelling?

8 From the Adrian Stokes poem 'Schizophrenic Girl' (Stokes 1981: 124).

9 From the Adrian Stokes poem 'Boundary' (Stokes 1981: 115).

10 'The God, as it were, addresses each of us, as he enters, with his "KNOW THYSELF", which is at least as good as "Hail". We answer the God back with "EI" (Thou art), rendering to him the designation which is true and has no lie in it, and alone belongs to him, and to no other, that of BEING' (Plutarch 1918: 73).

7 · Transplant

John Wynne and Tim Wainwright

The *Transplant* project began with a year-long artist residency during which we worked together at Harefield Hospital, just outside London, one of the world's leading centres for heart and lung transplants. The video excerpt on the accompanying DVD is from a film which was just one outcome from this project; others included a 24-channel gallery installation and a half-hour radio commission for BBC Radio 3. The full film accompanies a book of essays and photographs entitled *Transplant* (Hume 2008). Funded by Arts Council England and working closely with Victoria Hume, then manager of Royal Brompton and Harefield Arts, we photographed and recorded patients, the devices they were attached to or had implanted in them, and the hospital itself.

All of the patients featured in this piece had undergone a heart and/or lung transplant or were waiting for one when we met them. Some have died since; some are enjoying relatively good health; some continue to struggle with chronic infection and other issues related to tissue rejection. All the recordings and images originated within the transplant centre. The consciously still images of patients and the hospital environment contrast with a constantly shifting soundtrack, some of which has been been twisted and shaped in response to observations by the patients themselves.

While at Harefield, we noticed that sound on the ward seemed to come in waves: sometimes it was quiet enough to hear nurses' uniforms swishing, birds singing outside and the snap of latex gloves, but the atmosphere regularly built to a cacophony of bleeps, bells, phones, pagers, voices, trolleys, bins, bags and plastic apron dispensers. Our observations and interviews confirm the assertion made by anthropologist Tom Rice that in hospitals sound takes on 'a more affective quality *because* of the drought in other sensory modalities' (Rice 2003: 5, original emphasis). As one of the project participants, heart transplant recipient Kate Dalziel, puts it in her essay in the book *Transplant*, life on the ward 'involves a curious mixture of sensory deprivation and sensory overload' (Dalziel 2008: 23). Particularly if they are restricted to bed, what patients see is limited, smells are generally overpowered by disinfectant and the food is

bland. Consequently, hearing becomes arguably the most vital sense for understanding the environment and making sense of one's experience.

Ed Baxter writes in the *Guardian* (22 September 2008): 'Both dignified and brutal, Transplant evokes the melancholy and trauma that underpin this uncanny transaction'. The recordings are made at such close range that they sometimes make uncomfortable listening: they reveal the grain of the voice and expose deep-rooted evidence of the malfunctioning body. Yet as revealing as the recordings and the photographs are, what we hope remains intact is the dignity of the participants. We approached participants without a pre-determined agenda and tried to maintain a critical awareness of the dangers of voyeurism, steering away from sensationalising a naturally dramatic subject. Undoubtedly the most shocking of the photographs is that of Ian Wood with two ventricular assist devices (VADs) piped directly into his abdomen. Ian, who lived with these devices for over a year, was one of the few patients who declined to participate in the project, but after watching a television documentary which featured a friend of his who had received a heart transplant, he was so angered by what he saw as misrepresentation that he asked to take part. When Tim arrived with his camera, Ian threw off his shirt and said 'Photograph this!'

Both sound and image hover on the boundary between documentation and abstraction, moving back and forth across that porous frontier to heighten perception and reveal hidden meanings:

> Through all the differences and similarities of sound and vision, seeing and hearing, looking and listening, a rapprochement emerges in the collaboration. The insistent stillness of a photograph hovers in and out of the temporal movement of spoken language, but both add a powerful sense of human presence and individuality to each other. (Toop 2008: 35)

8 · Ochlophonic Study: Hong Kong

John Levack Drever

Hong Kong – ex-colony, gastronomic Mecca, global metropolis, special administrative region – renowned for its densely populated 24/7 society, where, contained within its iconic vertical skyline, the ultra-modern juxtaposes and interpenetrates tradition, superstition and laissez-faire capitalism. Permeating its pervasive roar, which is primarily formed of the audible residue of transportation and construction, human utterance forms an incessant and ubiquitous sonic backdrop. Every speech act contributes to a mosaic of competing voices. Yet there's a method in the madness, deriving order from this heterophonic polyvocality, in a Darwinian struggle for communication intelligibility: the 'Lombard reflex'[1] is a prevalent feature of everyday speech and the 'cocktail party effect'[2] is an expertly practised mode of listening.

Through the juxtaposition and superimposition and further manipulation of pedestrian field recordings of the atmospheres and sound events garnered between 2002 and 2008, of everyday, pastime and auspicious activities, taken from public, commercial, educational and sacred sites of inner-city Hong Kong, *Ochlophonic Study: Hong Kong* aims to present an evocation of the sheer intensity of this most vociferous and yet diverse of places. In part, the work also discloses my own experiential *making sense* of Hong Kong, through the prism of the vestiges of my east-of-Scotland cultural idiosyncrasies, *et al.* Ostensibly there is a naïve method at play in its devising, an approach that I have found strikes a chord in the travel writing of Elias Canetti on Marrakesh:

> Here I am, trying to give an account of something, and as soon as I pause I realize that *I have not yet said anything at all. A marvellously luminous, viscid substance is left* behind in me, defying words. Is it the language I did not understand there, and that must gradually find translation in me? … I wanted to lose none of the force of those foreign-sounding cries. I wanted sounds to affect me as much as lay in their power, unmitigated by deficient and artificial knowledge on my part. (Canetti 2012: 17)

I surmise that my knowledge of Cantonese is very slightly more functional than Canetti's handle on Moroccan Arabic or Berber; nevertheless, I find that my listening *in*

situ or when back in the studio tends to return to the 'force' of the language, dare I say, towards a Schaefferian mode of 'reduced listening'. In turn, this has implications for the listener of the final work, and as I have found, and not surprisingly, Cantonese speakers from Hong Kong have a predilection for apprehending the work as a set of linguistic codes and geographical clues.

The *Ochlophonic Studies* series is an ongoing practice-based research trajectory into the auditory culture of crowds, the first being a site-specific sound installation for the nave of Gloucester Cathedral in 2001, where I explored a reversal of celebrant and crowd. *Ochlophonic Study: Hong Kong* is the second from a triptych of works that take Hong Kong as their subject. The first comprises hydrophone recordings of the waters of Hong Kong and the final work displays the sounds of Mai Po marshes, a WWF Hong Kong and Ramsar site.

Notes

1 The 'Lombard reflex' (Lombard 1911) is the habitual adjustment of diction in relation to the distance of the desired recipient and the quality of the prevailing sonic environment (i.e. noise). A looping process of speaking–listening–speaking is formed, resulting in changes in intensity, pacing, articulation and the realignment of spectral peeks.

2 The 'cocktail party effect' (Cherry 1953) is the ability to focus one's auditory attention on (or to have one's attention attracted by) a single sound source extrapolated from a multidirectional field of multiple streams being radiated by multiple sound sources.

9 · The Castaways Project

Steven Feld and Virginia Ryan

> The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at an instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again.
>
> Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*

From 2003 to 2008, visual artist Virginia Ryan created, at her studio in Accra, Ghana, more than 2,000 sculptural paintings, collectively named *Castaways*. Each piece measures 9.5 × 11 inches from the borders of a modest and uniform handmade wooden frame, painted white. Inside the frame, against a thin plywood backing, is a collage composition created entirely from washed-up materials collected along shorelines in and outside Accra, at Pram Pram, Jamestown, Labadi, Anomabo and Korlegonno. These washed-up objects tell many stories about things that were once desired, given or taken, exchanged, used and worn, carried or discarded, left to the tide and then carried back to shore. Composed anew, they are white-washed, and flicked through with grey–gold, resonant with the colours of foam and sand. These *Castaways* are exhibited as a collective artwork, 200 or more pieces in a group. The exhibition typically takes up entire walls or rooms, with the pieces hung close together in rows, as if in a continuous wave. Each encounter with the walls and rows of *Castaways* refigures the West African beach as a contact zone, as interacting ocean currents of natural and human-made materials referencing gold, slavery, displacements, forced motion, departure and return. Simultaneously, it creates a protective domestic environment in miniature, artistically emphasising the power of repetition and number, of places and pasts in the present.

Speaking of the art and the work to make it, Ryan said:

> Reverie suggests how you give yourself to the place and the place gives itself to you. Both your sense of time and your sense of space go and then there is a kind of mirage effect too, of seeing things in the distance and then you get close to them, or seeing things as they get swept back into the water, or seeing things as the tide deposits them in front of you and sort of gifts you with these charms. The reverie part of it is perhaps also tied to taking care of something that's been abandoned that was really important. I felt

like I was kind of mothering these discarded things, taking them and transforming them into something that people might care about. And giving back some kind of innocence to the objects. But I was helped very much in the process by the sea itself, because these objects had all been in water, or near water, touched by water. And then they were literally sun-bleached. So they'd already gone through a cleansing rite before they got to me. In a way I just kept the process going. (Feld, in conversation with Ryan, 2010: 117)

Anthropologist and sound artist Steven Feld first saw Ryan's *Castaways* at her Ghana studio in 2004. In the rows of objects he could hear the washing-up-and-out sounds that deposited Ryan's raw environmental data, her signs of multiple human and material pasts, on the shorelines of Ghana in the present. He felt as if he were putting an ear to a huge seashell and listening to the detritus of history. The conversation that followed led to Feld's production of *Anomabo Shoreline*, an ambient sound composition creating an acoustic memory of the Gold Coast becoming the Black Atlantic. Recorded at Anomabo beach, one of Ryan's key collecting sites and an important slaving centre, and then created in the recording studio, the sixty-minute composition consists of a continuous and seamless mix of eight separate spatial stereo sound tracks recorded from the shore, at the water's edge, in the ocean, in and behind rocks and rock pools, and even under the sand. Constructed as a site-specific sound installation to accompany the *Castaways* exhibition, the soundtrack plays continuously at ambient volume, bringing the water's motion to the viewer as she or he moves in to experience of waves of *Castaways*.

As an additional accompaniment to *Castaways*, Feld produced a fifteen-minute video on DVD, *Where Water Touches Land*, also made for installation. The video consists of time manipulations of multiple visual elements, from still photographs of the shoreline's sand and water formations, to portraits of individual *Castaways*, to video of Ryan at Anomabo beach collecting washed-in objects, and in her Accra studio working on composing and transforming them into *Castaways*. Mixing real-time images with different kinds of contracted or expanded time, and fusing time-lapse photography with the real time of waves coming in, the video uses as key soundtrack material ambiences from the *Anomabo Shoreline* recording, as well as music featuring Accra musicians Nii Noi Nortey and Nii Otoo Annan.

The Castaways Project, consisting of a catalogue of Ryan's art, with Feld's audio CD and DVD, was published in 2007, simultaneous with the installation at the Whitworth Gallery, University of Manchester, to coincide with the 'Beyond Text?' conference. The Whitworth exhibit was one of several events in northern England marking 2007 as the 200th anniversary of the abolition of slavery by an act of British Parliament. As part of the Whitworth presentation, curator Rupert Cox animated a public conversation, moderated by Don Brenneis, where Caryl Phillips, author of the acclaimed book *The Atlantic Sound* (2000), discussed the Whitworth installation with Ryan and Feld. The exhibit was meant, like the conference itself, to stimulate dialogue about how, at their conjunction, anthropology and art can theorise the sensuous power of memory, that flashing up 'at an instant' that so captivated Walter Benjamin. But because the ocean

sound overstepped the exhibit hall itself and porously flowed into adjacent parts of the museum, the exhibit also spoke to the slippery, unruly and encompassing nature of art as evocation. Speaking of the sensation of the installation environment, Ryan said: 'There was something quite synaesthetic about it in terms of the sensation on the skin; that wetness, that reverberant space, that sense of time being a little more watery or elastic' (Feld, in conversation with Ryan, 2010: 118).

10 · *Air Pressure*: a sound film

Angus Carlyle and Rupert Cox

The film *Air Pressure* was made as a 'sound film'. This concept proposes that the relations between sound and image are more than illustrative and that the act of filmic interpretation involves a critical interpolation of the senses of looking and listening. Specifically, it brings to the fore the role of listening and requires that images are composed and linked together in terms of their aurality, which is not simply to convey information about the source of a sound, but to show the way that sound feels as the part of the sense of a place. This idea of expressing one sense in terms of another is not new and, as Kandinsky's synaesthetically inspired abstract paintings have shown, not particular to the medium of film. But it is in film and in works like Dziga Vertov's *Enthusiasm: Symphony of the Donbass* (1931), Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: Symphony of a Metropolis* (1927), Benjamin Britten's scores for General Post Office films like *Night Mail* (1936) and Humphrey Jennings' and Stewart McAllister's masterpiece *Listen to Britain* (1942) that the idea of the sound film achieves some of its earliest and most well known expressions. The soundtracks to these films convey a modernist sensibility in their self-conscious fragmentation and abstraction of the image–sound relationship, but also express a documentary commitment to the labour, routine and contingent details of everyday life. The film that we have made and presented on the DVD draws on these forms of poetic realism and adds a further dimension by addressing scientific understandings of the world that is being represented.

The world in question – a small organic farm, located at the end of one of the two main runways of Tokyo's Narita airport and directly beneath the flight path of incoming and outgoing planes – is a world constituted in important ways by numbers. These are numbers such as the length of the runway which directly abuts their farm at 2,800 metres but is too short for the airport authorities, which wish to extend its length to 3,000 or 3,500 metres; the height of the planes as they land over the farmhouse roof at 80 metres and the number of flights scheduled for 2012, which was 300,000. There are also the numbers for measuring the sound levels of this air traffic around the farm and calculative formulas for estimating the effect of these sounds on human health.

The sound maps produced from the acoustic data of over 104 sound-level meter readings around the airport are a way of visualising the actuality of sound on this farm. But trust in these numbers is strained, as they cannot articulate the experiences of living with the raw immediacy and interminable strangeness of sound on the farm and therefore they are disconnected from the family who live there. Had we only pursued in this film the questions raised by the spatialisation of sound through numbers, formula and the shapes of waveforms, we may have looked to other modernist experiments, such as the surrealism of Jean Painlevé's film *Science Is Fiction: The Sounds of Science* (1927), with its mesmeric images of life beneath the water. Indeed, in this vein we tried to lend an eye to the odd, shark-like tail fins of taxiing jets constantly traversing the walls surrounding the farm and gave an ear to the shocking sonic juxtapositions of gargantuan metal flying machines and the tiny snipping, clicking instruments of farm labour. Intertwined with these incongruities was a commitment to the realism of the site, born from the series of films that initiated our project. These films, known as the *Sanrizuka* series, are monumental works of Japanese documentary cinema, shot on grainy sixteen-millimetre film in a *vérité* style over a nine-year period by the director Ogawa Shinsuke and his dedicated crew.

The films documented one of Japan's longest and most violent post-war civil protests, as the farming community of Sanrizuka in rural Chiba prefecture were forcibly evicted to make way for the construction of Narita international airport. The protests began in 1971 as a group comprising local farmers and left-wing political activists and students, calling itself the 'Sanrizuka-Shibayama group to oppose the Airport' (*Sanrizuka-Shiba-yama Rengo Kūkū Hantai Dūmei*) got caught up in a series of confrontations with the police and airport authorities. The drama and tragedy of these events were famously captured in the seven films made by Ogawa. They are full of images of massed ranks of police and protestors arranged in phalanxes and columns, armed with poles and batons, clashing with each other as if acting out an epic battle from an Akira Kurosawa film. The tactics of these opposed groups showed different relationships to the environment, as protestors tied themselves to trees and tunnelled into the earth and the police advanced behind bulldozers and erected steel walls.

These conflicts greatly diminished the number of farming communities living on the land and by 1983 the airport opposition group had fractured and split. As of 2011 there were only two farming families left who occupied land within the airport itself, located at the end of runway B, one of the two main runways for the airport. Their situation directly evokes the filmed scenes of past protest, as they are surrounded by a steel wall, observed by security guards in a watchtower and must enter and leave their farms by means of road tunnels that link them to the outside world. The conflicted world in the Ogawa films exists on the farm as a weight of history, felt through the visible signs of physical structures which are animated by the sounds of aircraft landing over and taxiing around the farms' walls. These sounds bear down upon the listener through the force of sonic frequencies and intensities, turning politics into noise and transducing the materials of the past into forms of air pressure.

It was the problem of noise and the attempt to understand and ameliorate its effects through acoustic science that first brought us to this site, together with the Japanese acoustic scientists Professors Hiramatsu and Matsui, who had established working relationships with its inhabitants. Hiramatsu's understanding of the ways that acoustic science is deployed in Japan as a politically expedient mathematics of collective experience led to our collaboration on the art–science project funded by the Wellcome Trust Arts awards scheme that this film is an outcome of. Hiramatsu's work at various airports in Japan had shown that aircraft noise was not heard in isolation as a series of discrete events with predictable effects, and that to understand its impact on health meant coming to an appreciation of aircraft noise as part of the acoustic ecology of everyday life.

We made two visits to one of the farms, belonging to the Shimamura family, once in 2010 and again in 2011. We went together with Hiramatsu and Matsui and a retired Narita civic official, Mr Hayashi. Using various sound recording devices and a high-definition still camera we tried to document the contrasting and conflicted relationships of the farm and the airport. We let the sound design direct the story. The aim was to avoid having any reliance on narration and interview material, and to provide this kind of discursive context in other (text-based) forms accompanying the film. This chapter is one such text.

The film *Air Pressure* was the first outcome of that work and we used it as an experiment to understand how we might link images to sounds for the purposes of a gallery installation. The design of the film, like the design of the installation, aimed to make sound the subject and listening the primary orientation for an audience. The issue we faced was not one of material, for we had a lot of different sound recordings, made from fixed points, to capture atmospheres, and from handheld microphones which could follow closely and give sonic detail to the various farm activities. We also amassed a large volume of film, shooting mostly from a fixed-point, middle-distance perspective, using the depth of field and high resolution of the camera to show the economies of scale at work in the contrasting lives of the farm and the airport.

Working in this way meant that images were composed so as to provide a position for the audience of relative stillness and for the sense of movement and detail in each sequence to come primarily from the different sounds layered over each other. This was a very different way of working from that evidenced by the Ogawa films, which had a restless quality, with the camera following events as they happened and trying increasingly to get inside the action. The efficacy of the sound in the Ogawa films, limited as it was by the available technologies of the day, came from the emotional urgency of the direct oral testimony of the protagonists and witnesses to the drama of resistance. We did find this material useful in the sound film and deployed some found footage from the Ogawa collective, setting up our camera at night to film the projection of the footage onto a bamboo grove at the back of the farm. This grove was where some of the protestors who died in their confrontation with the police are buried and where planes are constantly taxiing past on the way to and from the airport terminal

building. In the film, these flickering images are hard to see clearly against the swishing bamboo screen backdrop. This was a quality that we appreciated in this space, where the tragic memory of past protest is animated by the bamboo stalks rustling against an ear-tingling stew of high-pitched whining, droning and screeching sounds of taxiing planes. These aspects of sound and image in the bamboo grove drew our attention to the issue of design in creating a space for the audience of the sound film, where overlapping sounds could direct the viewer in interpreting images. This design issue came down to questions of framing, of visual editing and of metaphors.

The static frame and composition produced by the camera we employed were significant because they referenced the visual situation of the farm in the airport, which was defined by a series of occluded, concentrated viewpoints. Being on the farm meant being ever presently aware of the intersecting views from the overlooking security watchtower, the airport control tower, and the cockpit and passenger windows of the planes passing over and around the site. Ironically, these views were reciprocated by us and the farmers from the windows of the upstairs floor of the 'egg house', the highest point on the farm, from where we watched planes stacking up and descending over our heads onto the runway.

We referenced this window-like frame for seeing into and out of the farm in the second sequence of the film, where we filmed the approach to the farm through the front window of Mr Hayashi's car. The soundtrack for this sequence is the one piece of dialogue in the film, drawing upon the overheard radio chatter of pilots talking and listening to instructions on their descent into Narita.

Such a discrete piecing out of vision into framed scenes would suggest an equally focused sound design, and part of the challenge of this sound film was in giving rein to the play of different frequencies and intensities of sounds that were heard all around the site. These created a feeling of disorientating strangeness and discomfort to us as visitors and we hoped to communicate something of this to our audience. This was what the installation tried to achieve, by turning the frame of the camera into the interior space of the installation, a sound-proofed room with a side-by-side twin-screen, 8.2 sound design (eight channels of sound, separated into two clusters, each with an additional sub-woofer), where visitors could move about so as to hear different sounds and aspects of sounds and see different views of the site. The single-screen film on the DVD presented here as a stereo mix offers, then, a different sound–image impression from the installation, one defined more conventionally in cinematic terms by the sequence of images.

The sequencing is a matter of editing; another way in which we tackled the question of prioritising sound over image was simply to separate each film scene through the use of a blank screen, over which the audience hears the sounds of the next scene before it appears. The idea was that when the image appears, the audience already has an aurally derived mental image from which to make the visible sensible. This made sense as a general editing strategy but also raised a question which we have not yet fully addressed, about the uniform length of time given to each blank sequence

and therefore what extra sense might be derived from adjusting the duration of each blank segment to the scene which succeeds it. On occasion, our scoring of the blank interludes can provide the audience with an opportunity to re-encounter the acoustic qualities of the previous scene, as when the sound persists after the image with which it has become associated has faded from view. The metallic reports of the two farmers' secateurs slicing through the stems of okra and aubergine seem, for example, to take on sharper resonance against the blank screen than they did when concretely located with reference to visualised human bodies.

The final and fundamental issue in the design of the sound–image relationship was about the kind of knowledge we might lay claim to have created in the sound film. While it was evident from the start of the project that the figures and charts of acoustic science were insufficient signifiers of listening, it became clear in the course of recording that alternative concepts were also problematic. For instance, the terms that define the concept of 'soundscape', such as 'lo-fi' and 'hi-fi' in categorising the signal-to-noise ratio of a sonic environment and 'key-note' in identifying a fundamental tonality, had little purchase in this space, where the sonic worlds of the airport and the farm cannot be separated from each other. The work of the farm had a tempo and rhythm tied to the seasons and, as such, an inevitability that was matched by the daily sonic schedule of aircraft traffic landing, taking off and taxiing around the farm. The resolute determinacies of these two forms of life, one rooted in the organicism of the earth, the other in the aerial topographies of the skies, were arrested only by the forces of nature and catastrophe. Only the weather, natural and human-made disasters, like the Tohoku earthquake and the associated Fukushima nuclear accident, which occurred just prior to our second visit to the site, in 2011, could interrupt the schedules of farm and airport alike. This was why we turned to natural metaphors in composing sound and image into scenes that would articulate a kind of knowledge of this site as an unfinished and ongoing relationship between the farm and the airport. This was the thinking behind the scene where an electrical storm brings to a halt all activity on the farm and the airport.

Also, in another scene at the opening of the film, the whine of a bee segues into that of a plane whose back-draft ruffles the branches of a large pine tree above the canopy. In the final scene of the film, nature becomes nurture as we hear the soft voices of a couple holding up their child to watch the planes taking off from Narita's viewing spot of 'cherry blossom hill'. These metaphors did not resolve the acoustic ecology of the farm and the airport into a way of knowing through sound that was as coherent as that described by the anthropologist Steven Feld in his coining of the term 'acoustemology' (Feld and Basso 1996). However, neither did they celebrate the spectacular and triumphal aspects of these planes, ascending and descending, as one critic noted of the sound film when it was in the installation.[1] Even in the signature sequence of the film, where the massive shape and volume of a descending plane suddenly emerge over the fields of the farm, we tried to accentuate the close-up sounds of the farmers working, as a way for the audience to appreciate the organicism of the relationships between

the family members and the farm. The aim was to achieve what Michel Chion called 'synchresis' (Chion 1994), that is, a synchronicity of different sounds and image into a filmic unity which makes the extraordinary seem sensible.

The epic sonic events of planes landing and taking off are such a regulated and recurrent aural and visual feature of the farm that it would have been easy to focus simply on these, as the sound level meter readings demand. It was by learning to listen to these sounds through the elemental temperaments of nature and nurture that we came to appreciate, as we hope you do in watching this film, the strange interludes when these two worlds of the farm and the airport achieve, if only temporarily, an eerie and uneasy kind of coexistence.

Note

1 See 'This Week's Exhibitions', *Guardian*, 5 November 2011.

11 · *Sounds from Dangerous Places: Chernobyl*

Peter Cusack

Sounds from Dangerous Places is a long-term multisite[1] project to explore the soundscapes of sites of major environmental damage. It asks the questions 'What can we learn of dangerous places by listening to their sounds?' and 'What insights can sound offer into the relationship between the environment and the social and political contexts of a "dangerous place"?' Most sites visited are areas of major environmental/ecological damage, but others are nuclear sites or the edges of military zones. The danger is not necessarily to a short-term visitor, but to the people of the area who have no option to leave or through the location's role in geopolitical power structures. There is often an extreme dichotomy between an aesthetic response and knowledge of the danger, whether it is in terms of pollution, social injustice, military or geopolitical forces. Dangerous places can be both sonically and visually compelling, even beautiful and atmospheric. The project presents the field recordings in the belief that they reveal aspects of the locations that are different from and yet complementary to those of visual images and texts.

One place visited in this multisite project was Chernobyl, Ukraine, to record sounds related to the nuclear disaster that occurred twenty years previously. The three recordings presented together on the DVD accompanying this volume are illustrative of Chernobyl's thriving wildlife, the remnants of radioactivity and the region's folklore.

1 Dawn chorus with woodpecker 5.00am *2:42*

In contrast to human life, nature at Chernobyl seems to be thriving. The evacuation of people has created an undisturbed haven and wildlife has taken full advantage. Animals and birds such as bears, wolves and black storks, some absent for decades, have moved back and the Chernobyl exclusion zone is one of Europe's prime wildlife sites. So far radiation seems to have had little effect on their presence in the landscape. The increase in wildlife numbers and variety means that the natural sounds of

springtime are particularly impressive. For me, the passionate, species-rich dawn chorus that we heard every morning of our visit became Chernobyl's definitive sound.

2 Radiometer bleeps and cuckoo – Pripyat *1:59*

Pripyat is the abandoned ghost town that used to house most of those who worked at the nuclear plant. Beside the Ferris wheel in the playground a small handheld radiometer bleeps at around 250 micro-roentgens (higher than normal) and a cuckoo calls in the background. It is an ironic juxtaposition of sounds, as both allude to sudden eviction. Cuckoos pirate other birds' nests, ejecting the eggs and chicks in ways that evoke the traumatic forced evacuation of all Pripyat residents following the radiation released by the reactor explosion. In Ukrainian folklore, the cuckoo's call counts the years of one's life.

3 Song about nightingales *3:18*

This song[2] refers to the Chernobyl nightingales and tells the story of a mother and daughter. The daughter asks permission to go to the cherry garden to listen to the nightingales, but the mother allows her only to open a little window. The mother does not reveal to the daughter that she is secretly looking for a husband for her.

One of the untold stories of the disaster is its subsequent effects on the lives of the thousands of villagers forced to evacuate the exclusion zone. These are not the people who worked at the nuclear plant, but the forest dwellers and small farmers whose families had lived there for generations and whose culture is intimately linked with the landscape and traditions of the Chernobyl region, expressed in a rich folklore of songs.

This song is sung by an older woman now living in Stovpyagi, a village specially built for the evacuees about 150 km from Chernobyl. It is in the Ukrainian steppe, a landscape quite different from their familiar forests. The songs are a powerful reminder of their former lives and are sung with great emotion – felt by those listening as well as by the performers.

Notes

1 The sites include the Chernobyl exclusion zone, Ukraine; the Caspian oil fields, Azerbaijan; the Tigris and Euphrates river valleys in south-eastern Turkey, which are threatened by massive dam building projects; North Wales, UK, where Chernobyl fallout still affects sheep farming practice; nuclear, military and greenhouse gas sites in the UK, including Sellafield, Dungeness, Bradwell, Sizewell, Thetford Forest, Rainham and Uttlesford.

2 In making this recording I was assisted by my travelling companion, Misha Maltsev, and I met the singer in the company of Ukrainian friends Olena Chebanuk, Oleksiy Dolya and Mykola Semynog, all specialists in the region's folklore.

12 · *Contest Behaviour*

Louise K. Wilson

The unique physical geographic and maritime position of Plymouth's Tinside Lido – located as a projection into the sea and subject to strong tidal forces[1] – prompted this sited audio work in two parts: a composition with synchronised illumination and fountain, and a four-channel sub-aqua version.[2]

The subtle relationship between natural and human-made forms along the Hoe, coupled with the striking architectural presence of this 1935-built Lido, contextualised and directed the selection and editing of the audio material. The initial desire was to construct a work predominantly from recordings made with hydrophones (microphones that can be used to listen to or record sound transmitted through liquid) gathered within or not far from Plymouth Sound. Through amplification, this liquid world 'outside' would be brought inside for those swimming in the Lido's chilly seawater and also, for one evening, made audible to spectators in a public broadcast event. However, a problem was the noisy shipping traffic in the Sound, which largely masked the discrete sounds of aquatic life. Therefore I increasingly made forays inside 'closed' spaces to collect recordings, which ranged from various marine laboratories belonging to Plymouth University, to the confined interiors of two nuclear submarines docked at Devonport and to the Royal Navy Submarine School.

For *Contest Behaviour*'s public broadcast, which was at dusk, the contained territory of the Lido became an arena for the playing out at different scales of what I call 'contest behaviour'. This involved ominous naval sounds[3] vying with the aggressive repeated 'rapping' made by a hermit crab – shell against shell – as it attempted to coerce another crab into an 'eviction' during a shell fight. This fight was 'staged' and recorded in a glass dish in the School of Biological Sciences at Plymouth University. The voice of a researcher from the School featured at intervals in this sound work – reciting selected quotations from Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*. This passage was chosen to illustrate the perceived relationship between game theory and animal behaviour in her study of hermit crabs.

On the occasion of the public broadcast, when this piece was heard in the gathering dark, this eavesdropping on the 'staged' crab fight dovetailed with a less sensational montage of steady rasping sounds created by limpets grazing on microscopic algae, recorded from the shoreline at 3 am. The static quality of these curious noises, picked up through a contact microphone and a bat detector and blasted out from the powerful amplification system, echoed the preceding section, which comprised harsh punctuations of military voices and radio static. This overheard extract of the radio transmission from military shipping prompted one listener that evening to assume this to be a live intervention from an unseen but immediately proximate vessel.

This work reflects upon forms of sensory knowledge and the ways in which the so-called 'Silent Service' submariners are trained to recognise the occurrence of known and unknown sounds. Unknown sounds are termed 'transients' and given names such as 'clunks', 'bangs', 'transmissions', 'Bio', 'chain/Trawl noise' and, more colloquially, 'babbling brook', 'laughing man', 'frying fat', 'big bee' and so on. When these sounds are recorded using hydrophones, as I did for this work, particular sound qualities become discernible and through the design of the playback of this sonic register these sounds can become unsettling to the listener. This is because they are heard in the absence of accompanying visual or textual material and when the listener is deprived of familiar signifiers there can be a frustration and unease in attempting to 'read' their meaning and informational content. The disorientating immediacies of the sonic events included in *Contest Behaviour*, which also included the rhythmic breathing of a party of scuba divers and a melodious tank of dogfish in a feeding frenzy, explored a liquid world that submariners and others engaged in the life of water try to make knowable. Through the forms of listening that this work engendered, the anomalous qualities of *all* technologically disclosed sounds are tacitly acknowledged and the audience was immersed in a world made up not of determinate proximities but rather of an enveloping sense of the uncanny.

Notes

1 At the time of writing, the spring gales of 2012 that had battered south-west England had temporarily caused the pool to be nearly submerged by the sea.

2 *Contest Behaviour* was originally commissioned by Sonic Arts Network and i-DAT for Expo Plymouth in 2007. The full audio and images of *Contest Behaviour* can be found at http://www.lkwilson.org/index.php?m=proj&id=24&prev=Sound%20Works.

3 Gathered from the 'Sound Room' of HMS *Turbulent* as well as archive recordings (supplied by Qinetiq and the Royal Navy).

FILM

13 · Films about ordinary people: the Japanese home drama and virtual ethnography

Catherine Russell

The *shomin-geki* was a staple genre of Japanese cinema from the early 1930s through to the 1960s, after which it became a popular television genre, anchoring the television industry much in the same way as it had anchored the film industry for thirty years before. Often translated as films about 'ordinary' or 'common' people, the *shomin-geki* is in many ways synonymous with *shoshimin-eiga*, or films about the lower middle class. Japanese film genres tend to be named for their semantic content, and thus there is a great deal of overlap between wife films, mother films, husband-and-wife films and salaryman films, all of which can be heuristically grouped together under the umbrella of the home drama (*homu dorama*), a term that is often used interchangeably with *shomin-geki* and *shoshimin-eiga*. For the sake of English-speaking readers, I am going to use the term 'home drama' to refer to this large category of film practice.

The longevity of the home drama genre is due in part to the way that it was adapted to fit the changing landscape of Japanese society and, at the same time, it provided an important dimension of continuity through which those changes could be accommodated to the national imaginary. The genre has become a primary means by which non-Japanese viewers gain some insight into the daily lives of Japanese families; and for Japanese viewers, it plays an important role in the national imaginary and cultural economy, symbolically visualising the home as a site of negotiation between traditional and modern values. Even though the films are populated by movie stars and attached to the names of well known directors, the home drama arguably helped define a certain ideal for Japanese audiences in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Contemporary Japanese people are for the most part losing touch with this key genre of film history, and the genre has become an object of nostalgia for many. Indeed, the films themselves are premised on a nostalgic sense of the family unit and traditional home, as they are continuously transformed in the machine of modernity.

In this chapter I want to frame the home drama as a sensory mode of ethnography that is nevertheless virtual – a phantasmagoria of cultural practices and feelings. Despite its industrial origins and fictional premises, it provides a valuable portrait of

modern Japanese culture as it imagined itself to be. As a production category that consists of hundreds of films, the home drama provides an important perspective on the construction of Japanese modernity. Through the narrative strategies of film melodrama and the theoretical discourse of vernacular modernism, I am proposing a methodological intervention into this body of work. As a genre cinema, these films challenge much of the received wisdom about art cinema versus commercial cinema and between 'tradition' and so-called modernisation. As a production of visual culture, it provides an extraordinarily detailed perspective on the experience of everyday life as it was translated into the public sphere.

The most well known home drama director is Ozu Yasujiro, but he is only one of many directors who specialised in these films about families, which were shot mainly in domestic sets, privileging the low seating arrangements and geometrical spaces of Japanese architecture. Ozu refined the genre to certain formal patterns of narrative and cinematic space, and he became internationally recognised in the 1970s as an auteur of modernist cinema. Japanese critics had long believed that his cinema was 'too Japanese' for foreign audiences to understand (Bock 1978: 71) and the debate over whether his films are radical or conservative continues to preoccupy some film critics.[1] The study of Japanese film has long been bogged down by the overdetermination of cultural difference. It has been only in the last ten years, with the influence of bilingual film scholars, that we have been able to move beyond the Orientalism and Occidentalism of modernist aesthetics to appreciate the role these movies played in the national imaginary and in global film practices.[2]

In film studies, the methodology known as textual analysis was developed in the 1970s as a technique of deconstructing the political, psychoanalytical and semiological web of the so-called apparatus of narrative cinema. In the last fifteen or twenty years, however, this approach to the film text has given way to historical and cultural methods through which we can recognise the vagaries and contingencies of reception. Mass culture can no longer be dismissed as hegemonic delusion, but is analysed as a more complex site of desire and affective experience. The textual productions of the culture industry are nonetheless riddled with the contradictions endemic to capitalism and modernity. Jane Gaines describes the theory behind the 'Dream Factory' as a double movement in which 'the forces of containment meet the forces that cannot be contained':

> If articulation of the 'ideological' has been the most important contribution cultural studies has made to film studies, the understanding of this 'double movement', the duality of mass dreams, has been the single most productive metaphor for describing how popular ideologies work in and through our favourite films. (Gaines 2000: 109)

The problematic that concerns us here is the viability of this theoretical orientation to what we might call 'other people's favourite films'. And yet, while the home drama may be considered 'the most Japanese' of film genres, we need to recognise that it is not at all difficult for non-Japanese viewers to understand these films (usually with

the proviso that they are appropriately subtitled). Their melodramatic tales of family conflict may be more subdued than their soap opera equivalents in the West, but that is precisely what makes them arty – obscuring their role as everyday forms of popular culture in Japan. The genre emerged in the 1920s from a constellation of various elements of Japanese, American and European cultures, so the familiarity of the films should not really be surprising.

The unusual poetics and stylistic form of many examples of the home drama enhance the sensual and affective dimensions of everyday life, lending them a utopian, nostalgic and comforting aspect. In my view, the quotidian detail with which the home drama is preoccupied constitutes a panorama of Japanese cultural history, which calls for a methodology closer to Walter Benjamin's 'dream analysis' than to formalism. Through the evolution of the genre, the dynamics of social constraint and the conflicting desires of nostalgia, family bonds, consumer capitalism, individualism and sexuality are made visible as they are reconfigured over time. Moreover, given the prominent role of food and drink in these films, the visual field is invested with a larger sensory experience. Further, the timbre of voices and the soundtrack music supply a complex auditory experience, even for the non-native spectator. However, it is mainly on the level of emotion and sentiment that the films communicate ethnographic knowledge. My argument is for the most part a theoretical one, as so few of the films I am discussing about are actually extant, and even fewer are available in translation. I am extrapolating here from the work of two auteurs: the well known director Ozu Yasujiro and his contemporary Naruse Mikio, who made eighty-nine films from 1930 to 1967, most of which fall into the category of home drama.

The genre was developed at Shochiku studio, which was the only major studio operating in Tokyo from 1923 to 1934, a period in which the city underwent significant reconstruction and expansion following the 1923 earthquake. At its Kamata studio, Shochiku specialised in *gendai-geki*, or films with contemporary settings. Ozu began directing there three years before Naruse, and in addition to these two directors, Shimizu Hiroshi, Gosho Heinosuke, Shimazu Yasujiro and Ushihara Kiyohiko created films that gradually refined the aesthetics of the genre under the supervision of the very influential studio head, Kido Shiro. The studio's extensive output during the formative years of the late 1920s and early 1930s constitutes a cornerstone of modern Japanese mass culture (Wada-Marciano 2000). It was responsible for providing the dominant imagery of metropolitan life for a nation that was still in fact largely rural and unevenly modernised. The home drama, which became Shochiku's signature genre, combined the novelties of modern urban experience, heavily influenced by Western customs, iconography and technologies, with a nostalgic portrayal of community.

The Shochiku style involved a hybridisation of Hollywood-inspired film techniques with the aesthetics of *shimpa* and *shingeki* theatre. As early as the 1890s, *shimpa* theatre used actresses rather than *oyama* (female impersonators) and developed stories from serialised novels with female protagonists. Above all, the plays addressed contemporary issues of morality and ethics emerging in a changing society – precisely

the melodramatic material that Kido Shiro recognised as being of interest to women, who were beginning to comprise large segments of the cinema-going public in the late 1920s. The other key influence was *shingeki* theatre, which was closely modelled on the nineteenth-century realism of Chekhov, Ibsen and Shaw.

Equally important to the development of the genre was American cinema, particularly a cycle of Universal studio films called 'Bluebird', which have been largely overlooked and lost, despite their huge popularity in Japan (Wada-Marciano 2000: 54–55). Charlie Chaplin's sentimental comedies were also a major influence, as were the films of Ernst Lubitsch. Japanese directors were great fans of American and European cinema, and modelled their storytelling methods on the Hollywood style, while adapting them to the settings and customs of everyday life in modern Japan (see Figure 42).

As a genre about 'ordinary people', the home drama offers a remarkable portrait of how this class was defined over time. In the pre-war period, the genre was focused on the working class and families surviving on the margins of society. Class tensions and conflicts were very much part of everyday life, even if film-makers rarely went so far as outright 'critique'. The 'tendency film', born of the proletarian and leftist movements of the 1920s, overlapped with the home drama to illustrate the social tendencies by which the poor remained poor. By the time film came under legislative regulation in 1937, the genre was seen as a threat to the image of society that military censors strove to maintain in an increasingly nationalist regime.

42 • *I Was Born But...* (*Umarete wa mita keredo*, Ozu Yasujiro, 1932)

In the post-war era, the genre emerged as a powerful vehicle of nostalgia for the pre-war days. 'Ordinary people' in the 1950s became more upwardly mobile in many instances of the genre and, as the decade unfolded, more and more of the accoutrements of consumer capitalism clutter the *mise-en-scène* of the sparsely furnished Japanese home. The men are typically salarymen working in offices and unmarried women are frequently portrayed as office ladies, whose main function is to serve tea. This is the mode in which the genre was launched into television, as a favourite among Japanese housewives. One can still find references to the distinctive formula of the home drama in contemporary *anime*, family melodramas and J-horror. However, the last real vestige of the genre was the *Tora-san* series of films that ran from 1967 to the mid-1990s.

Characteristics of the home drama

The characteristics of the home drama genre inevitably shifted over the fifty years of its dominance, but we can perhaps identify three principal characteristics. The first of these is the role of the home, both architecturally and thematically. The films favour the low seating arrangement of the traditional Japanese home. Domestic scenes are frequently set around a low table, and other features of the home are prominent in set design, camera placement and editing. Both Ozu and Naruse frequently use the frames of interior and exterior *shoji* panels as framing devices in their shot compositions, creating a visual formalism that in Ozu's later films becomes a particularly rigorous style. The films tend to set up a thematic contrast between inside and outside, private and public space, suggesting how the role of the home is inseparable from the corollary role of the city, with its offices, restaurants, bars, shops, streets, commuter trains and parks (see Figure 43).

The second key characteristic of the genre is the family. In many instances, the family is without a mother or father; in other instances, the family includes a full roster of grandparents, in-laws and small children; and in many of the films, the narrative hinges on an imminent change to the family brought about by marriage or death. The question of the arranged marriage versus the love marriage is one of the central dilemmas of modernity that is played out in these films in which female desire and subjectivity are effectively interrogated. This question, alongside another crucial event – the death of a parent or grandparent – situates the genre as an allegory of social

43 · *Early Summer* (*Bakushu*, Ozu Yasujiro, 1951)

44 • *Tokyo Story* (*Tokyo monogotari*, Ozu Yasujiro, 1953)

change; and in this sense Ozu's film *Tokyo Story* (1953) serves as the exemplary model of the genre (see Figure 44). For his part, Naruse made many films about marriage and romance in which the profound unhappiness of the couples is linked to the body politic. Tensions between generations bring out different value systems, which tend in turn to be associated with traditional practices in conflict with modern individualism. Social change repeatedly forces the dissolution of the family, but the larger historical forces are rarely condemned or demonised (see Figure 45).

45 • *A Wife's Heart* (*Tsuma no kokoro*, Naruse Mikio, 1956)

The home drama is very much a genre of resignation, which brings me to the third key characteristic: de-dramatised narrativity. Little happens in these films except perhaps a marriage or a death. But even these events are rarely shown with any spectacular dramatisation. The films instead are concerned with the relations between

46 · *Every Night Dreams* (*Yogoto no yume*, Naruse Mikio, 1933)

people as they are played out in the most mundane activities – mainly eating meals and drinking tea, sake or beer. Characters in these films frequently go to the movies themselves, or to the theatre, baseball games or other activities. Most remarkable about the genre is the way that, in the narrative dispersal of several characters, whose everyday activities are intercut, it becomes a mode of observation. Character psychology is intense, but emotions are restrained, and often remain unspoken. The tensions are interspersed with comic sequences, and the narrative routines are always casual, and seem almost arbitrary. Life always goes on, no matter what happens (see Figure 46).

These basic characteristics of the home drama add up to a realist aesthetic, and the films are often described as being documentary-like. The films seem plotless, although they are highly scripted; and the acting style is very controlled, with few large gestures. It is a realism that is also constructed from a moral universe of restraint. Excesses of behaviour are contained in the form of comedy but, in general, the characters strive to maintain an equilibrium in the face of threats from outside. Even if the material conditions of everyday life change over the decades, the rituals and dramas of the family remain much the same. The deflated narratives have predictably aligned the films with modernism; but this has tended to obscure the conditions of their original

production and consumption. Because Japanese directors frequently violate the 'rules' of classical Hollywood narrativity, film scholars have tended to identify them as examples of radical modernism.[3]

Vernacular modernism

My approach to this cinema is largely guided by Miriam Hansen's notion of 'vernacular modernism', which is grounded in the cultural theory of Benjamin and Kracauer. Hansen argues for a 'wider notion of the aesthetic' than has hitherto governed film studies methods (2000a: 11). She focuses on the 'nexus between modernism and modernity' as a means of recognising the role of cinema in the global public sphere (2000b: 333). Vernacular modernism incorporates the various cultural practices by which the experience of modernity has been articulated and modified, placing cinema alongside the 'everyday' discourses and practices that it also mediates, such as fashion, architecture and advertising. In this, Hansen endorses and follows up on Benjamin's key insight that 'artistic practices' need to be situated within 'a larger history and economy of sense perception ... the decisive battle-ground for the meaning and fate of modernity' (2000b: 333).

In Hansen's discussion of the Hollywood cinema as a vernacular modernism, she points to the way that the international distribution of classical cinema might have 'advanced new possibilities of social identity and cultural styles' (2000b: 341). My approach to Naruse's cinema is a methodological intervention into the paradigms of Orientalism, which have tended to emphasise the Japaneseness of Japanese cinema, at the expense of its modernity. The framework of vernacular modernism enables us to recognise this cinema as a discourse of mass culture, without neglecting the aesthetic and sensual qualities that make it an auteur cinema.

If we take the home drama genre as a whole as an instance of vernacular modernism, it provides a privileged insight into the ways that the 'local' Japanese culture became global in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Through its strategies of decentred narrative plotting and spatiality, which exploited the technologies of cinematic representation, it became a vehicle for negotiating many of the contradictions of everyday life. Japanese modernity is given the sensual, affective form of melodrama, in which the tensions of class and gender are given dramatic form. The narrative conflicts themselves are ultimately irresolvable, as families are torn apart by the various forces of real estate, love, death and war. And yet the films – as texts – enable us to read these social forces as discourses of individualism, urban sprawl and corporate culture, against which a nostalgic form of the past is constructed as a discourse of community and social cohesion.

In film studies, this interpretive practice is known as 'reading against the grain' or cultural critique, but I think it can also be much more than this, and without devaluing the aesthetic, poetic and sensual effects of the films. Indeed, it is precisely their high

level of affect that made these films so popular in Japan. Taken as objects of cultural analysis, they enable us to see how the mythology and iconicity of the Japanese 'folk' as an ethnographic category – which played a key role in the imperialist culture of the Fifteen Years War – was sustained within the construction of Japanese modernity. Indeed, given the incredible ideological upheavals of twentieth-century Japan, the home drama arguably played a crucial role in transforming the notion of the folk into that of the family in Japanese modernity. Within a global framework of international film consumption, these films can take on new meanings for audiences better able to 'read' their discourses of desire and disappointment.

Looking In: Meshi (Naruse Mikio, 1951)

In his discussion of the sensuous appeal and resonance of visual anthropology, David MacDougall writes:

> Beyond influence or aesthetics or meaning, films are made to become objects in the world, to exist in their own right – as Sontag puts it, in the 'luminousness of the thing in itself.' If a film wants anything, it is to preserve its immediacy each time it is seen, undimmed by age or fashion or reputation. (MacDougall 2005: 30)[4]

Following W. T. J. Mitchell's provocative question 'What do pictures want?' (2005), MacDougall invites us to recognise the kind of knowledge that is produced by the encounter with images. He suggests that spectatorship is a kind of redoubling of the film-making practice: 'It creates an almost continuous impetus toward convergence with the objects and bodies on the screen' (2005: 30). In the Japanese home drama we can perhaps locate an aesthetics of everydayness within a transcultural, transhistorical dialectics of spectatorship.

By way of illustration, I would like to focus on a recurring motif in Naruse's cinema: the image of a home, shot from the outside, often at night, looking into a softly lit domestic scene. Variations on this image recur throughout his long career. Sometimes figures can be glimpsed inside; sometimes it is only the translucent paper screens that are illuminated; sometimes the light from the home becomes part of a larger landscape of street lights. Within the context of the home drama, this motif underlines the observational mode of the genre. In some instances, this shift from inside to outside occurs after a tense domestic moment. At other times, it marks a kind of pause or interlude within a scene or between scenes. Sometimes the view from outside links the home with its softly lit windows to the larger design of street lighting, including neighbouring homes and shops, streetlights and signage.

In order to understand the dynamics of this image, I would like to offer a detailed example from a single film. Naruse's film *Meshi* (1951) is based on a novel by the woman writer Hayashi Fumiko, and it marked Naruse's post-war come-back. The title translates as 'repast' in English, and means 'food', or the cooked rice that is the

staple diet of those with simple tastes, or 'ordinary people'. It also has implications of a useless life, or the unglamorous necessities of life (Ericson 1997: 85). *Meshi* was a box-office success and a critical favourite, spawning a subsequent series of 'marriage films' that Naruse made through the 1950s with the same studio (Toho), and roughly the same crew, and with many of the same actors reprising their roles from one film to the next.[5] *Meshi* features several popular stars of the period and is indicative of how the home drama genre managed to accommodate the shifting desires and anxieties of post-war Japan, especially the new generation of young people, with a changing view of social norms and behaviours. The story is about a woman named Michiyo (played by Hara Setsuko) living in Osaka with her 'salaryman' husband – a white-collar office worker. They cannot afford to have children, and Michiyo is tired of the routine of the homemaker and she is clearly becoming depressed. Her husband is not a bad man, but rather lazy and inattentive. A visit from his flirtatious young niece Satoko annoys Michiyo and inspires her to leave her husband, to visit her family in Tokyo to 'think things over'. Satoko (Shimazaki Yukiko) is a young woman with bad manners, who in the film is symptomatic of the emergent post-war generation with a revised set of values.[6]

The scene I want to look at is in the family home in Tokyo, where Michiyo's mother lives with Michiyo's brother and his wife. It begins with Michiyo and her mother (Sugimura Haruko) sitting in a room discussing Michiyo's marriage. Her sister-in-law enters the house from the garden, and we get a shot of the two women inside, framed by the panelled windows (see Figure 47). The sister-in-law, Mitsuko (Sugi Yoko), enters the house and tells them briefly that she has been visiting the neighbours and their

47 · *Repast* (*Meshi*, Naruse Mikio, 1951)

new baby. Then she helps her husband (Kobayashi Keiju) do some accounting on an abacus, while Michiyo and her mother continue their conversation (see Figures 48 and 49). They hear a knock on the door and Satoko arrives, seeking refuge from the storm howling outside (see Figure 50). In fact, she is running away from her parents and following her aunt Michiyo around, in keeping with the disruptive bad-girl behaviour that she had previously brought to Osaka. The scene continues with Mitsuko making tea and the women talking while the brother continues working. His authoritative interruptions of the women's conversation are made from the adjoining room. The discussion becomes heated as Satoko is accused by the brother of being rude and irresponsible. At one point in the middle of this discussion we get an emblematic shot from outside the home looking in (see Figure 51). The four women are sitting on the *tatami* and are framed obliquely through the window panes. The mother is on the left of the frame, the sister-in-law, Mitsuko, is facing us, Michiyo's back is to the camera and Satoko is on the right of the frame. Throughout the scene, the sounds of the storm are always heard when the camera is positioned outside, but cut out when it is positioned inside. The women are clearly uncomfortable, and after this shot they are made more so when the brother insists that the guests make up their own futons, interrupting his mother's offer to make up the beds.

48 · *Repast* (*Meshi*, Naruse Mikio, 1951)

49 · *Repast* (*Meshi*, Naruse Mikio, 1951)

50 · *Repast* (*Meshi*, Naruse Mikio, 1951)

To remove a still image from a sequence like this using the techniques of frame capturing is, on one level, an interruption of the flow of the moving image. However, Naruse's use of architectural framing devices, in this and many other instances, is already a means of pausing the narrative. The technique is clearly linked to the other

51 · *Repast* (*Meshi*, Naruse Mikio, 1951)

types of framing that he uses within interior sets, in which the lines of the walls, screens, windows and doors are used as framing devices within the shot. It is also linked to the language of melodrama, in which figures are caught within tableau configurations that freeze the emotional dynamics of the scene into an emblematic composition.

Peter Brooks has described the 'democratic' language of melodrama as it emerged in eighteenth-century France as an 'expressionistic genre' that resorts to visual and sensory forms of signification to represent the moral imagination. Written and spoken language are inadequate vehicles for the deep-seated meanings of melodramatic textuality (Brooks 1976: 55). In the case of *Meshi*, the 'meaning' of the scene described above is typically contradictory and vague, despite the heightened tension created by the simple devices of a stormy night, deep shadows and the cut-aways to the view from outside. On the one hand, the sense of family security and safety is created through the trope of shelter from the storm; on the other, the family scene is unsettled by the arrival of the unwanted relative and by the brother's paternalistic authority, which quite clearly disturbs Michiyo. The family home is suddenly transformed into a closed space of social protocol. In retrospect, we may 'read' (or interpret) the scene as a wake-up call for Michiyo. Her own home in Osaka is lacking in paternal authority, as Satoko has easily seduced her philandering husband there, whereas her brother evidently keeps a tight ship. On the other hand, she is suddenly identified with her wayward niece, as both are AWOL from their own homes, and her brother addresses them together as imposing guests.

The ending of *Meshi*, which comes shortly after this scene, is deeply ambivalent. The next day, Michiyo delivers Satoko back to her parents, and when she returns to her brother's home she finds that her husband has come for her. They are reconciled and she heads back to Osaka with him on the train, where she wonders, in voice-over, whether this is what they call happiness, living with a man who is 'tired, still fighting, floating in this river called life'. She does not seem sure about this happiness. Naruse and his scriptwriters reportedly struggled with the ending, which Hayashi herself had left open. One writer had them divorcing, but she was overruled by studio bosses, who preferred a 'happy ending' (Russell 2008: 215). In any case, the ambivalence of the final version is a classic melodramatic finale in which undercurrents of doubt infuse the image of closure.

Such a reading of the film is in keeping with the dynamics of the Hollywood women's film and the American melodramas of directors such as Douglas Sirk and Nicholas Ray. Even if Japanese melodrama has its own lineage, its cinematic modality in 1951 is clearly related to and partially influenced by American genre cinema, and exhibits the same capacity to 'respond to the questions of modernity', as Christine Gledhill puts it (2000: 232). Gledhill argues for a view of melodrama as the mechanism of a genre system in which 'ideologies provide material for symbolic actions,' which are then given aesthetic form and returned to the social sphere (Gledhill 2000: 240). Gledhill's provocative survey of the study of film genre concludes with the following observation:

> Genres are fictional worlds, but they do not stay within fictional boundaries; their conventions cross into cultural and critical discourse, where we – as audiences, scholars, students, and critics – make and remake them. (Gledhill 2000: 241)

As an example of the home drama, *Meshi* indicates how this 'specifically Japanese genre' can be subsumed under the generic umbrella of 'melodrama' and then 'remade' – or at least reconfigured – as a series of cultural artifacts and as a privileged insight into Japanese culture. If it is an instance of vernacular modernism, a 'reading' of a film such as *Meshi* must account for its 'Japaneseness' without, however, allowing national culture to overdetermine its meaning. Ethnographically, we can itemise certain details of everyday life in a Tokyo suburb circa 1951: the architecture, the serving of tea, the family roles, the costuming (the mother alone wears a kimono), the abacus, the *tatami* rooms and futons, and so on. Even though the film was shot on a studio set, it subscribes to a realist aesthetic announced by the film's title and opening epigraph attributed to Hayashi: 'How could I love the pitiful human lives more than I do, the pitiful human lives, which survive in this infinitely wide universe?' Naruse's brand of realism is infused by Buddhist values of *mujo* (impermanence) but also by the naturalism of a Western realist aesthetic vocabulary in which poverty is close to reality.

Naruse's cinema is so utterly realist, though, that there can be no transcendent or spiritualist implications in its narrative of destiny, transience and inevitability, as there

is in Ozu's cinema (Richie 1974; Schrader 1972). The sense of resignation in Naruse's cinema can usually be accounted for by other conventions of Japanese melodrama, even if Naruse's characters tend to consistently survive and subvert more typical narrative patterns of victimisation and subjugation. The tension between happiness and social responsibility is a long-standing Japanese melodramatic conceit, referred to as a dialectic of *giri* (duty) and *ninjo* (human feelings). In a film like *Meshi*, it is evident that human feelings are not simply feelings for others, as implied in Hayashi's epigraph, but self-satisfaction and individual fulfilment, values with increasing significance in the post-war period.

The reflexive use of framing devices in *Meshi*, typical of the home drama, can also be linked to certain conventions of Japanese aesthetics. The effect of detachment was particularly well developed in the wood-block prints (*ukiyo-e*) of the Edo period, which also tended to use architectural details in their graphic compositions. The aesthetics of *akirame* or 'urbane resignation' seems particularly appropriate to Naruse cinema. Further glossed as 'indifference which has renounced attachment and is based on a knowledge of fate' (Bell 2007: 146) *akirame* enables us to link this particular reflexive compositional detail to the sense of destiny implicit in *Meshi*.

By taking the viewer out of the scene and introducing an external perspective, the film assumes that doubleness noted by Gledhill. We are with the characters, empathetic to their trials and tribulations – in this case Michiyo's deep unhappiness – but are also able to see how little control they have over their own destinies. It is also important to note that the window as depicted here is not a feature of 'traditional' Japanese architecture, which used sliding screens with a variety of opaque, transparent and solid panels to allow light into the home. This Tokyo suburb would have been of twentieth-century design; and, moreover, Naruse's use of the window owes a great deal to the codes of domestic melodrama in which the window is a key boundary between private and public spaces.

Both Ozu and Naruse punctuate their narratives with cut-aways. In Ozu's case, these have been directly linked by film critics to pivot words in Japanese poetry, or 'pillow shots' (Burch 1979). The home drama is in this respect closely linked to the aesthetics of *wabi* (calm stillness) and *mono no aware* (sweet sadness, or a 'sensitivity to things'). And yet we have to be careful about attributing such devices to a kind of 'national character' – and about assigning them some kind of anti-realist formalist radicality. In the home drama, such interruptions are well balanced and well integrated into the global idiom of melodramatic cinematicity, and are stylistic elements of a sophisticated language of narrative expression. In *Meshi*, for example, the framing may be evocative of Japanese aesthetics, but the setting is quite clearly modern Japan, and the story itself, with its themes of urban alienation, marital breakdown and generational divisions, is also about the anxieties of modern life. In keeping with Japanese aesthetic vocabularies, we are pushed out of the scene, as viewers, and invited to pity the protagonist; at the same time, in keeping with cinematic narrativity and the star system, we are invited to sympathise with Hara Setsuko's character, Michiyo.

Virtual ethnography

As a form of vernacular modernism, the home drama deploys the codes of cinematic representation to articulate the contradictions and anxieties of the 'local' or ethnographically specific culture. The use of framing devices, and the technique of stepping out of the characters' world to look into it from outside, is, moreover, a shift to a detached perspective on the action. This spectatorial position may be aligned with that of the ethnographer, the observer and the historian. The cinema screen is effectively transformed into a framing device; the transparency of the cinematic 'window onto another world' becomes a virtual reality, as Anne Friedberg has argued. She suggests that the 'episteme' or the specific form of knowledge produced through the cinema is at once a subject effect and reformulation of the window metaphor from 'screen' to 'frame'. Virtual images, she says, 'have a materiality and a reality but of a different kind, a second-order materiality, liminally immaterial' (Friedberg 2006: 11).

In other words, the particular framing techniques that are used in the Japanese home drama effectively mark the images as virtual. To return to Figure 51, the image 'captured' from *Meshi*, which is indeed 'luminous' in its lighting design, the viewer is at once arrested and pulled out of the drama; and at the same time, one is drawn into the circle of women, the familiarity of the home and the intimacy of the scene. It seems exemplary of MacDougall's proclamation of film as 'objects in the world', and even if interpretations of the scene are possible – as I have suggested – they are also contradictory and quite likely contentious. The chief effect of the scene is purely sensual, but not necessarily 'transparent' as Sontag would have it. In 'Against Interpretation', Sontag calls for an experiential relation to art, through which we can 'recover our senses' by dethroning content in favour of an attention to form, by paying more attention to surface qualities than trying to dig for deeper meanings (Sontag 1969: 103–104). I would argue that the home drama enables us to do this with respect to its pacing, lighting, compositions and performances but, at the same time, it is still very much a textual discourse and a virtual image of family life in twentieth-century Japan. David Bordwell's study of Ozu (1988), which carefully analyses the director's techniques of storytelling, seems to correspond to Sontag's prescription, and yet his formalist approach fails to account for the film's sensual dimensions or its subject effects.

MacDougall also invokes W. T. J. Mitchell in his rethinking of visual anthropology, whose theory of images desiring their viewers also seems highly relevant to this particular still from *Meshi* (Figure 51), and to the home drama more generally. Despite their deflated narratives, their repetitive formulas and their limited range of sets and locations, these films draw us in. Not only were they popular in Japan when they were originally produced, but they have continued to circulate as 'art cinema' within an international cinephile community. It may not be possible to ultimately account for their appeal; and yet the technique of interrupting the 'action', stepping out and away from it, only to return, seems important in this respect. Moreover, when Mitchell

explores possible psychoanalytic explanations for the desire of pictures, he jettisons technical jargon for a simple observation that 'the question of what pictures want ... is inseparable from the question of what women want' (2005: 35). The difference or otherness of the moving image lies precisely in its immateriality, or its virtual status, which is not to say that it is feminised, but that it has taken over the role of the feminine in image culture.

As 'ethnography', then, we are clearly not dealing with any form of mimetic representation, but with an anthropology of desire and fantasy, which tends to be articulated most directly in the melodramatic modality of genre cinema. The Japanese home drama often tends to turn on the question of a woman's happiness, even if, in Ozu's case at least, it is not registered as directly as it is in Naruse's cinema. The changing roles, opportunities and subject positions available to women in modernity tend to make them emblematic of modernity itself. The threats posed by modernity to traditional social structures are played out in Japan, as in many parts of the world, across women's bodies. Sexuality may have no place in the home drama, and yet, as the Satoko character in *Meshi* indicates so clearly, sexuality is one of the most dangerous threats to domestic stability within the melodramatic terms of the genre.

Conclusion: phantasmagoria of the folk

The fact that a film genre devoted to the representation of 'ordinary people' became such a central feature of the Japanese studio system is symptomatic of Japanese modernity. The abstract category of the classless 'common people' is an implicit rejection of the luxuries associated with capitalism, and thus embraces the key motifs of Japanese modernity as it was theorised in the inter-war period – contemporaneous with the inauguration of the film genre. One of the key figures in Japanese ethnographic discourse is Yanagita Kunio, whose notion of the 'folk' was highly influential in the 1930s. For Yanagita, the 'folk' was a category that 'still prevailed' in large cities 'in the form of customs and in the capacity to reconstruct the life of "one's native place" in the process of vanishing' (Harootunian 2000: 322).[7] As H. D. Harootunian explains, in the face of the unevenness of modernity, the discourse on everyday life took on the weight of national identity in the face of massive incursions from foreign cultures during this period. For Yanagita,

> Understanding the folk required not interpretation but the exercise of empathizing with experience. The investigator had to be in a position to recognize what constituted the fund of spiritual beliefs the folk took as second nature – beliefs forever beyond the powers of the outsider to grasp. (Harootunian 2000: 323)[8]

The home drama was likewise notoriously described as being impenetrable to foreigners (Bock 1978: 71) and the films were not exported beyond the cinematheque circuit until the advent of electronic media (videotapes and DVDs), and even so,

in both theatrical and non-theatrical formats the genre has lagged far behind the more historical-based period dramas of Mizoguchi and Kurosawa in international distribution and exhibition. The Japanese genre system actually breaks down into two large categories, *jidai-geki* and *gendai-geki*, referring to 'period films' and 'contemporary-setting films' respectively. The notion of *gendai* is itself constitutive of Japanese modernity, as the 'contemporary' begins in the years following the 1923 earthquake, and the term falls out of favour with the decline of the studio system in the 1960s. Harootunian argues that *gendai* was a discursive means of reconstituting the space of everyday life within the terms of commodity culture and the massive importation of American culture (2000: 183). The movies were, not surprisingly, viewed as emblematic of the cultural transformation threatened (and promised) by modernity; the social solidarity of the family was among the key institutions that was undermined by the rapid urbanisation of the 1920s. Thus the genre of the home drama – one of the central subgenres of *gendai-geki* – emerged as a symbolic means of thinking through the social disruption of modernity, even while it essentially became the emblematic representation of Japanese modernity.

In Harootunian's analysis of the discourse on Japanese modernity that evolved during the 1920s and 1930s in Japan, he makes frequent recourse to Walter Benjamin's writings. Indeed, it seems to me that Benjamin's theory of the phantasmagoria, the central trope of *The Arcades Project* (1999: 14), is finally the best way of 'framing' the ethnographic dimension of the Japanese home drama. As a product of mass culture, the home drama quite clearly dramatises (or symbolises) the desires and ideas of modern Japan, but it does so in such a way that we are always invited to stand back and see them doubly: as a fantastic assemblage, and as real anxieties and aspirations. The films are at once so realistic and so stylised that their double articulation is laid bare. At the same time, the messages and truths that they convey about such ideals and desires are deeply divided and conflicted. In the home drama, the folk may have become the 'ordinary people', but in the process they also become modern families, in which traditional structures of authority, stability and order cannot always be taken for granted. The home itself, taken up into a genre of mass culture as an assemblage of frames, screens and windows, becomes subsumed within a technology of representation that undermines its realist discourse with the frame of the virtual.

Notes

1 For a good overview of the debates concerning Ozu's style and their larger role in Japanese film criticism, see Yoshimoto (2000: 12–23).

2 The home drama has arguably been a major influence on Taiwanese cinema, and on the cinema of certain Euro-American auteurs such as Wim Wenders and Jim Jarmusch.

3 The chief avatars of the radical Ozu are Noel Burch (1979) and David Bordwell (1988), who has detailed Ozu's poetics in terms of a parametric form of narration, or system of norms and structural patterns. To be sure, Bordwell's book situates Ozu as a modernist film-maker, although not necessarily as a 'radical modernist'. However, an earlier article, co-authored with Kristin Thompson, did make the

claim that Ozu's poetics were a strategic deviation from Hollywood norms (Thompson and Bordwell 1976).

4 MacDougall is quoting Sontag's *Against Interpretation*.

5 Naruse's subsequent 'marriage films' include *Husband and Wife* (*Fufu*, 1953), *Wife* (*Tsuma*, 1953), *Sound of the Mountain*, a.k.a *The Echo* (*Yama no Oto*, 1954), *The Kiss, Part III: Women's Ways* (*Kuchizuke, III: Onna doshi*, 1955), *Sudden Rain* (*Shuu*, 1956), *A Wife's Heart* (*Tsuma no kokoro*, 1956) and *Anzukko* (*Anzukko*, 1958).

6 *Meshi* (*Repast*) is available on DVD in the UK from Masters of Cinema (Eureka).

7 Harootunian is referring to Yanagita Kunio's 1993 *Meiji Taishoshi Sesohen* (Tokyo: Kodansha), vol. 4, pp. 182–187.

8 Harootunian is referring to Yanagita Kunio's *Teihon Yanagita Kunio zenshu* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo), vol. 25, p. 355.

14 · *Balkan Rhapsodies: 78 Measures of War*

Jeff Daniel Silva

Working (as I have now for many years now) in a visual and auditory art and research practice rooted in actuality is an enriching way of interacting, experiencing and interpreting the world and one's relationship to it. Non-fiction film-making is filled with a host of challenges and concerns that broadly range from ethics to aesthetics, yet these challenges are so intertwined that they should not be treated separately. The age-old binary division of 'content versus form' in non-fiction film seems to me an unproductive way of crafting a representation of the world that should be more organically expressive of both the maker and the subject. Content and form, ethics and aesthetics meet face to face in every frame of celluloid or every scan line of video.

I am particularly interested in finding film production and editing strategies that somehow combine the kinaesthetic 'lure' of the senses that cinema has to offer us with that of a more cognitive reading, thinking and problem-solving cinema of the mind, that is somehow to move beyond text but without abandoning it all together.

In my documentary work I attempt to do this by embracing and even highlighting an ambiguity between image, sound and text to explore these oppositional forces of film language. I am not merely suggesting ambiguity for the sake of confusion or viewer alienation but rather I am, as William Empson writes, exploring forms of visual and auditory 'nuance, however slight, which gives room for alternative reactions to the same piece of language' (Empson 2004 [1966]: 1). It is working within these nuances and discontinuities that I feel that documentary cinema can be most productive.

How to go about expressing this productive look both 'in the field' and in the edit room is something that I continue to explore and refine in my film-making practice. I believe that any pro-filmic experience, and for that matter any post-filmic image or sound, whether it be recorded by the ethnographer or it be an archival document, has productive potential for making meaning beyond the indexical. It is, however, the role of the artist/ethnographer engaged with being-in-the-world to see productively through both the camera/gaze and also through textual intervention of editing. As Kaja Silverman eloquently writes in *The Threshold of the Visible World*, this is 'to lighten

up darkened corners of the cultural screen and make it possible for us to identify both consciously and unconsciously with bodies which we would otherwise reject with horror or contempt' (1996: 81). I am interested in how film can take the spectator somewhere he or she has never been before, yet somehow to discourage the return journey home, by inhibiting the spectator's ability to assimilate the unfamiliar to the familiar, hence leaving the spectator's corporeal and psychological coordinates permanently altered.

To put this into context, I shall discuss a film that I hope exemplifies some of these ideas in my own practice. *Balkan Rhapsodies: 78 Measures of War* is a project that began in 1999, when somewhat on a whim I took my first trip to Serbia and Kosovo just a few weeks after the NATO bombings had ended in June of that year. Through luck and persistent pleading with the embassy in Greece I became the first American to be granted a Serbian visa just weeks after my country had led a seventy-eight-day bombing campaign against the Serbs. I spent four weeks travelling and living among working-class Serbs in and around Belgrade to attempt a better understanding of their situation and how they were dealing with the trauma of the bombings and, more so, of how they had managed through the continuous trauma of ten years of oppression and war that the Milosovic regime had imposed on its people. I had no previous personal background or research experience in the Balkan region, so when I crossed the border I was taking an immersive dive into a world that I knew very little about historically, culturally or linguistically. After the profoundness of that first trip in the summer of 1999 I was compelled to make a few more visits to Serbia and Kosovo between 1999 and 2005 to continue to grapple with the discontinuities between my own experiences of the culture and the ugly history of the region.

There are a few things related to *Balkan Rhapsodies* that I was contemplating when I first visited and continue to think about today. (1) How does one represent internal psychological trauma on film? (2) How does one activate the past within the present? (3) How to articulate the absurdity of years of conflict and oppression without trivialising it? (4) How does one accurately represent a demonised cultural body without being polemical? In the finished film (an extract of which is presented on the DVD accompanying this volume) I probe these questions and problematise them through the treatment of video material and the formal construction of it.

Rather than apprehending images of Serbian lived experience and Serbian history, I seemed to have let them apprehend and saturate me, and it was my desire to transmit that to the spectator. While filming, I engaged myself as fully as possible in lived experience, worrying more about being in the moment rather than making meaning. In Kosovo and Serbia I was a man with a movie camera acting as a barometer of lived experience, moving through the country with optics of care, compassion and an occasional flare for revelry. The profound intimacy of the experience touched me deeply, as I hope is reflected in the finished film.

Formally, *Balkan Rhapsodies* incorporates an episodic yet integrated structure gleaned from the free-form and emotionally infused musical rhapsodies of the

nineteenth century, which feature a range of highly contrasted moods, colours and tonality, with an air of spontaneous inspiration and a sense of improvisation. The spirit associated with the rhapsody is embedded in the content of the images, so the film embraces these principles to gradually weave together an accumulated range of experiences where the whole is much larger than the sum of its parts. The material ranges dramatically in length and substance, from intimate testimonials and observational footage to appropriated and manipulated archival imagery, performances and even some humorous interludes that aim to express the complex layers of history and experience that coexist and intertwine. It is the co-presence and polyphony of these disconnected shards of experience, congealed by a disjunctive form of internal textual quotation, that posits an even more complex 'story' beyond the images and sounds, beyond the spaces and absences.... The text quotes are disjoined from their antecedents, floating in the film's past or sometimes its future, only until they are rejoined in the filmic present by the cognition of the spectator's memory. Time and memory play a crucial role in how the structure delivers the content of the film, in order for the viewer to actively participate and problem-solve within the film to unlock meaning and make connections – working horizontally backwards and forwards in filmic and historical time rather than in a linear fashion, to create a shared deconstruction and reconstruction of memory and history.

It is an aesthetic of ambiguity that opens documentary film up to multiple readings and multiple truths. This space created between the film and spectator becomes the place where being and meaning collide. Yet, the power of a film to move is certainly not an objective fact but is something that occurs between the film and each of the viewers. The viewers are the final referents to the images of the film, closing the loop and bringing it back to the specificity of their own bodies, their own unconscious and conscious being. It is up to them to make *their* meaning of the work. I would further emphasise, as Dai Vaughn argues, that the verdict of whether a film is documentary or fiction, whether it is ethnographic or experimental, depends largely on the spectator reading, navigating and experiencing that space:

> The space opened up by the mismatch between record and signification is precisely the space in which the viewer's choice operates. Every hunter reads the spoor in his own way. The danger of documentary lies in anything which restricts the film within a set of institutionalized norms and erodes that power which the image takes from the viewer's sense of its contingency. (Vaughn 1999: 88)

15 · *Sweetgrass*: 'Baaaaaaah. Bleeeeeeet'

Lucien Castaing-Taylor

From an introductory text and interview with Jay Kuehner at Vancouver International Film Festival, 2009.[1]

Introduction

'Baaaaaaah. Bleeeeeeet' goes the soundscape of the Western frontier, virtually absent of commentary save for the alternately plaintive hymn and cry of man on the open plain and majestic mountain pass. Could it be that the great American film of the year is a painstaking documentary about … sheep? Roughly 3,000, give or take those not predatorily poached in the dark of night. And the two men, extant cowboys of nearly obsolescent labour, who tend the ranging stock over an arduous journey by hoof over Montana's cragged Absaroka-Beartooth range for a final summer pasture. Supporting roles are provided by their faithful horses and dogs that, towards journey's summit, have been worked to the bone and are 'played out'.

Lest one think this is another bid for curiosity in the currently fertile documentary campaign, in which no subject proves too minor or obscure for attention, it is worth considering that the theoretically overwhelming intent of *Sweetgrass*'s 'recordists', the term Lucien Castaing-Taylor and Ilisa Barbash prefer, is imperatively grounded in actual observation and a physically embedded presence. The recording of *Sweetgrass* entailed more than 200 hours of footage gathered beginning in the spring of 2001 by the roving Castaing-Taylor, whose apparatus-strapped torso, and innumerable synchronous microphones, gains astonishingly intimate access to both man and animal while provoking distraction only after having fallen asleep himself, rigged into his camera as the footage rolls on. At one time the project was saddled with the less prosaic subtitle *Becoming Animal*, as if the camera might somehow physiologically appropriate the innately widescreen vision of broad-eyed sheep.

The work of Harvard professors Barbash and Castaing-Taylor – heretofore operating within the academic field of visual anthropology and sensory ethnography, as well as authoring texts on transcultural cinema – is informed with a sense of purpose that may seem anachronistic, even arch, by the slack standards that constitute a current film climate which privileges the sensational over the durational. Their work 'seeks to conjugate the ambiguity and provocations of art with a documentary attachment to the immediate flux of lived experience'.[2] If conjugations of art and the immediacy of real life seem intuitively at cross-purposes, then primary among *Sweetgrass*'s manifold appeals is the means by which it effectively takes its thesis out to pasture, vulnerable to nature, attentively ambivalent towards its subjects and the landscape that sublimely holds and cruelly resists them. In spite of its unsentimental approach, this is an inevitable elegy intended for a theatrical audience, a film that may serve as a critical link, yoking the formal rigour of James Benning and Jean Rouch to the dramatic allure of a Discovery Channel episode. When is the last time you saw a nature documentary at the New York Film Festival?

The film's first frames depict a pastoral of 'big sky' country dotted with vestiges of civilisation – an abandoned pick-up truck covered in snow, a trailer presumably inhabited by ranchers – before locking in on its subject: a sheep, earmarked, chomping on grass. In an uncanny turn it recognises the camera and fixes its gaze upon us, wholly indifferent or in condemning judgement. It is a fortuitous moment on which to commence a film, communicating at once the kind of ticklish levity of the child in a petting zoo and the epic sweep of human history, with its folly of civilised sacrifice. Both sheep and men will furnish the ensuing chronicle with plenty of unforced humour, but it is clear that *Sweetgrass* is taking its animals quite seriously.

We watch the aggressive shearing of the sheep in their stables and then, voyeuristically, a live birth that is less *Tulpan*-style cinematic miracle than barnyard routine, as a lamb is ushered from its mother's womb and promptly plucked from the hay floor. Their tails clipped and ears marked, the sheep are readied for pasture, prompting the film to take to the hills in tow to a couple of cowboys, whose divergent natures are gradually teased by contrast from the ovine-centric procession. The collective pass through the local town's main street, rendered into a river of wool, is ironically other-worldly.

The physical toll of this labour is etched into the weathered face of veteran John, who comes to our attention while dozing off against a tree, while his younger sidekick, Pat, looks the part but is increasingly revealed to be not up to task. Together, these two become default actors in the unfolding non-drama, less seen than heard: *Sweetgrass*'s field recording makes no concessions to the murmurings of these men, even as the camera cuts away to slow pans of the epic beauty of the setting. The juxtaposition is intentional, lending a parodic tone to the men's near Beckettian exchanges, but the vernacular is distinctly working-class rural American. The risk of condescension is ultimately superseded by witnessing the undeniable dignity of the commitment of these men to their work, an act of determined will, to which its documenters wisely yielded.

In this Western in which the enemy Indian has all but vanished, only the unruly flock, and its predators of grizzlies, constitutes any real threat. Gunshots echoing into the wilderness prove ineffectual yet nonetheless index a history of frontier violence, now virtually absent from the native terrain and deployed overseas (a radio dispatch referencing soldier casualties barely registers). Where Man emerges in a less than flattering light against the reliably uncontrollable forces of nature, he leaves evidence of a particular ethos in the wake of his challenge. John's endearment towards the sheep, all sweet 'girls' and 'darlings', acts as a comforting lullaby (channelling Mickey Rooney more than John Wayne) compared with Pat's streak of misogynistic vitriol – a 'Get back up there you bitches!' approach to maintaining his charges. Still, one cannot help feel for the guy in a candidly broke-down moment which finds him sobbing to mommy on his cell, his gripes both given greater expression and belittled by the corresponding resolve of the camera's leftward mountaintop pan.

There is a lamentable irony to John's warbling of 'She'll Be Coming 'Round the Mountain' as it dawns that the implicit tautology of the refrain no longer holds true: this gruelling passage, the film's posthumous insert informs, is the last of its kind, an undertaking soon to be made obsolete by the more industrialised means of agri-business. *Sweetgrass* may be ambivalent in its pastoral evocation, but there seems little doubt that the entwined labour of these men and the fate of these sheep, cradled deep within an achingly beautiful landscape, have embedded themselves into the untraceable record of their makers' conscience. Accordingly, last light dapples like honey in the penultimate shot of sheep destined now for market, before ceding to a portrait of John, whisked away in the strangeness of a truck, his eyes fixed on the uncertain road ahead.

Lucien Castaing-Taylor interviewed by Jay Kuehner

Kuehner: You shot more than 200 hours for the film?

Castaing-Taylor: We thought it would be observational, even *vérité* in a sense. But if you look at *cinéma vérité*, the average shot length is much shorter and there's much less engagement with the aesthetics of the imagery. In *Sweetgrass* it's up to four minutes a take. At the same time I was editing works of my own, installation pieces for gallery exhibition. One piece that I'm just finishing up, *Hell Roaring Creek*, is a single static shot at dawn. It's so dark you can't really see what's going on, except that there's a creek coming towards you, and then 3,000 sheep cross over in 30 minutes as the light comes up. And it's cloudy, totally undramatic. It's handheld but I tried to hold the camera as still as I could while standing in a creek. It's a more structural piece, but in working this way the virtues of the long take crept up on us and changed the way *Sweetgrass* was edited.

Kuehner: The film's original polemic changed, and in its place a kind of observational approach prevailed. A different thesis emerged; of course there's man's relationship to animals, the environment. But there's this sense of the American West, just as in James Benning's *13 Lakes* (2004) or *RR* (2007), in which a portrait of industrialisation is implied through absence, set against nature. I'm thinking of that scene in which the sheep parade through town, and it feels so foreign yet there's a Radio Shack on that street.

Castaing-Taylor: It's not there anymore. The franchise went belly up the next year.

Kuehner: I've seen nominally similar films from China, such as Yu Guangyi's *Timber Gang* (2006), and they're transpiring in a part of the world that I may never see, nor economically or socially understand. Though the events of *Sweetgrass* are happening close to home, I don't fully identify with the labour, but what the men are doing feels universally recognisable. Still, there's this distinct sense of American vernacular. You're an outsider: how did you identify with the sheepherder's speech, and why did you let the voices emerge so thoroughly?

Castaing-Taylor: We didn't want to frame the film in some overtly political, propositional way about land rights. We ended up trying to be more phenomenological, you could say: evoking the lifeworld of the sheepherders as best we could, and to let that speak for itself, without any overt editorialising on our part. But not just the sheepherders – also the sheep, and especially the place itself. It's out of fashion to see nature as anything other than some secondary cultural construction, but we're all part of it, as much as city folks suppose otherwise, and throughout history humans and animals have commingled in ways that have deeply affected the kinds of beings we've become. But what phenomenologist ever considers the lifeworld of an animal? It'd be a joke. Yet at the same time, how can you not? Of course, sheep are totally overdetermined mythologically. They're the world's proverbially dumbest animal, ridiculed by us for their supposed credulity, timidity and stupidity. And at the same time they're the paragon of innocence, especially in Abrahamic religions – the carefree gambolling lamb, Christ as *Agnus Dei*, the Church as His flock, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Muhammad and King David all being shepherds, the Passover lamb as Korban for Jews, and their annual sacrifice in Eid-al-Adha for Muslims, and so on. Culturally, and religiously, the symbolic significance of sheep is huge, and has been basically ever since we domesticated them in the Neolithic revolution, 10,000 years ago. But when you're with them, and especially day in day out in such close quarters up in the mountains, their allegorisation just falls away, and you're left encountering brute sheep, negotiating with them where to go, where to bed down, where to feed, whatever: you're in this embodied relationship, resisting, cajoling, cohabiting together.

In many ways, the sheep stole *Sweetgrass*'s thunder, and I think we

probably ended up doing a better job portraying their experience of their world than we did of the humans'. But of course the mountains are also huge, and in some ways the central character of the whole film, more so even than the sheep. While I was filming they were this kind of amazing space for me – at once utopian and dystopian – absurdly beautiful but also with a dark underbelly and the ever-present threat of violence: Tennyson's nature, red in tooth and claw. And *Sweetgrass* is also about labour, of course. If I had to pinpoint a thesis of the film, it's related to the pastoral – romanticism, Wordsworth and so on – but also about blowing apart all the conventions of the genre. Acknowledging the allure of the pastoral but also expressing some degree of ambivalence, when you realise it's a fantasy, an expression of bliss or unity with the world, but one voiced by poets and rhapsodists and outsiders. For those whose lot in life is to live that fantasy, it's anything but lovey-dovey. It's an immense amount of work; the sheepherders are paid minimal salaries; they wear their bodies out; and you're at the whim of the elements and the mercy of nature.

In editing the sound, we worked with Ernst Karel, who's a phonographer, experimental musician and sound artist, and he came up with this six-track surround soundscape. In part because of the low quality of our recording equipment, but also because it was a deliberate aesthetic choice, much of the dialogue was unintelligible, like when they're cussing at sheep. But the important thing is the affect, the emotion, the corporeal experience. It's not about a verbal transcript. It's more about at once the bestiality and the musicality of language than what is being intentionally 'communicated' in some discursive sense. Our interest was skewed towards the affective colouration and the embodied engagement with the world rather than with understanding every word. That was also a political choice. Some people – educated urban middle-class non-Westerners – said we should subtitle the film, but there's something about people not being able to fully understand others that makes a statement about a culture that is not completely transparent or accessible. What gives them the right to understand them?

Kuehner: The notion of corporeal engagement is registered acutely. Not only are you as a documentarian compelled to become more physically engaged, albeit under less obligation, but you are witness to a simple but arduous routine of labour. The toll is reflected particularly in John, in the weary tone of his voice and the weathered lines of his face. There's such contrast between the two sheepherders, John and Pat: one tender and affectionate, riding low in his saddle; the other broken, practically misogynistic and bitching. There's something elegiacally cowboy though, a sense of the mythic West, the frontier. John is humming old cowboy tunes and they live in tents and light fires. There are even Indians, counting the faintest trace of arrowheads, which is a painful historic irony, merely a diversion for the cowboys.

Castaing-Taylor: In terms of the contrasting characters I think it's

an illusion, a function of the editing, unfortunately, because any film is reductive, a palimpsest of reality. We definitely intended there to be a tension between intimacy and violence, eroticism and misogyny, tenderness and aggression – all of these things being part and parcel of the fabric of our lives, of human existence, and definitely our relationship to other animals. That's universal. But I see now how the film perpetuates a simplistic schema of the serene, laconic elder – John could be so loquacious and sweet with the sheep, but he pretty much clams up with humans – versus the younger man, pushed to his limits, who goes off on this bestial, logorrhoeic diatribe. But I totally adore the interspecies promiscuity of his rant, how in a split second he manages to morph the sheep in his charge into pigs, whores, darlings, girly girls, bitches, goat-climbing cocksucking motherfuckers.... I'm just now completing another piece, called *Bedding Down*, in which John is on horseback trying to bed sheep down for the night, and it's one of the most diabolical things I've ever witnessed on screen! But if you think *Sweetgrass* maps this universal tension between aggression and tenderness onto its two main characters, well, it's a weakness of the film. We wanted that polarity, but didn't intend for each character to represent either end of it.

Kuehner: I thought of American primitivism. In the lullaby, the song, the vernacular, but there's this critical distance with the disembodied voice. How did you decide to retain this sourced sound that's not in the frame? There's a real power derived from this approach, as if the image was before me, the sound almost behind me, and I'm enclosed within the space of the frame, more participant than spectator.

Castaing-Taylor: I think this goes back to the difference between fiction and documentary. In traditional fiction films you're immersed in the diegesis, just as in post-Rabelaisian novels there's this naturalistic sense of being there with the characters, which documentaries don't push as far as they might. With *Sweetgrass*, we try to give you a sense of almost synaesthetic participation, and a lot of that comes from the sound, and from working with wireless lavs.[3] The first year we used only four, listening to them up to a mile and a half away. The second year I had eight. Mostly I put them on people, but occasionally I'd mike a horse, a dog or a sheep. I couldn't afford to do that as much as I'd have liked. While recording with headphones, if I had two sound sources, one in my left ear, one my right, they could be up to three miles apart, and if I could get a good-quality signal it was incredibly interesting, and at times the synchronicities were completely surreal. Though I think spectators will wonder if many of the soliloquies are non-sync voice-over – and we want them to wonder – all the spoken sound is essentially synched. (Ernst orchestrated a super-complex soundtrack, but we never messed with the sync speech, even if it was a mile or more from me and had ostensibly no relation to what I was shooting.) There was this temptation to move the sound around in the interests

of the rhythms, in the interests of cinema and 'art'. But I'm a complete vulgar positivist about this. I wanted it to be ambiguous, whether it was a voice that was laid over or found within. It was empirically crude, but it matters to me in terms of documentary practice. Perhaps the most clichéd sequence is the lullaby scene, when John is bedding down the sheep at dusk, and then he rides off on the horizon, screen right to screen left, in long shot, and he's singing. Suddenly it's broken up by him heeling his dog, 'Get back!' You feel this is some abstract poetic space rather than a direct documentary record, until you realise it's sync sound. We wanted that back and forth, from the seemingly mythological to gritty realism.

Kuehner: So would you describe *Sweetgrass* as a work of visual anthropology?

Castaing-Taylor: You should call it whatever you want to call it. Every ethnographic film festival has rejected it summarily. Ambiguity, or any kind of aesthetic opacity that isn't readily translatable into the limpid clarity of expository prose, is somehow lacking for anthropologists, in their quest for 'cultural meaning', which they're hell-bent on linguifying. And as often as not, out of all recognition. Clarity for me is an illusion, a product of a certain kind of cultural textology. I'm never clear about anything; are you? Isn't cognitive and sensory muddle the human condition? I'm not desperate for *Sweetgrass* to be recuperated as a work of visual anthropology, but simply because it doesn't tell you what it's about, and because there aren't that many words in it, doesn't for me mean it isn't a work of anthropology. It actually feels profoundly so to me, but maybe a more philosophical anthropology. And if I'm to take your question precisely – is the film 'anthropology'? – I guess I would say that *Sweetgrass* tries to relativise both the anthropos and its logos.

Kuehner: And it's not pedagogical *per se*, as the line of inquiry is experiential. Is this why you call yourself a recordist as opposed to director?

Castaing-Taylor: It goes back to this notion of our investment in the empirical, and sync sound. For instance, we never asked anybody to do anything. With the camera, I tried to insinuate myself into a position of insignificance, so I wasn't affecting what was going on in front of the camera, but I also didn't want anyone to pretend I wasn't there. So to say I was 'directing' is misleading. I prefer 'registered by' but it's too machine-like! 'Realised by' sounds okay in French, but it's risible in English. 'Recorded by' is more humble, which seems only appropriate. We've actually never discussed it, but I've noticed that a lot of the people making work in Harvard's Sensory Ethnography Lab are opting for 'recorded by'.... There's a way in which non-fiction films seek to appropriate the prestige of fiction with the whole 'directed by' business, which is another reason to drop it.

Kuehner: In a sense, the sheep take over.

Castaing-Taylor: There's a critique of the film that we failed the humans

miserably. I fear that's half right. I was aware of a shift in the film from nature to culture, animals to humans, as the piece evolved during editing, and once we became aware of it, we worked it quite deliberately. All the opening snow shots and the shearing sequence were placed at the end of the film all the way through years of post-production; we brought them to the beginning only very late on.

Kuehner: The ending, with John in that truck, suggests that this may be more about him, and the uncertainty of his future and by extension his job.

Castaing-Taylor: I don't think it suggests it's about him alone, at least we hope it won't be taken that way. It's uncertain, sure, because it's unclear what he's returning to, what the future holds in store for him. But he's also a prism by this point for the larger community, a whole way of life, which, if you hadn't already gathered, you're about to learn from the following inter-title, in a classic trope of salvage ethnography, is over, *finito*: no more sheepherding in the mountains, the twilight of a whole chapter, the chapter, in many ways, of the American West. So it's about the uncertainty of a collective future. It was really hard for me to be reconciled to having that shot at the end – to ending on a human, I mean – and I was only able to come around to it with the proviso that we'd also have the shot of the mountains over the end credits. And then the credits are also absurdly long. This was a deliberate choice – there are hardly any 'characters' in the movie, yet hundreds are thanked. It's a memorial to the community, to all who participated in the film-making, but also to the contemporary community as the heritor of a way of life, a way of being-in-the-world, that is now history. It's bearing witness to them and their lives. But as the inscription of names is rolling, the sound is just of the mountains in the fall, with the odd elk bugling but freed from sheep and humans: it's the wilderness returned to its condition when humans and domesticated animals were not there. There is a huge disjuncture between this and all that has come before it, especially the scene in the truck. Of course, since it's the end credits, the spectators are half out the door already, so it's probably all moot.

Notes

1 The interview was published in an altered form in *Cinema-Scope*, 41 (winter 2009).
2 The quote is from the official press release for the film (2009).
3 'Lavs' are Lavaliers – small clip-on microphones.

16 · *Cottonopolis*: cinematography, ethnography, historiography and texture

Cathy Greenhalgh

Cottonopolis (director, producer, cinematographer Cathy Greenhalgh, eighty minutes, 2016) is a feature-length documentary weaving scenes of contemporary Indian handloom and powerloom cotton manufacture with memories and thoughts of 'Manchesters'. South-east Lancashire gave birth to the Industrial Revolution, built on Britain's empire trade and an abundance of water and coal, with the city of Manchester nicknamed 'Cottonopolis', a megalopolis of hundreds of mills. Aspiring to its size and borrowing engineering and design, Lodz, named the 'Manchester of Poland', and Ahmedbad in Gujarat, north-west India, known as 'Manchester of the East', as well as other 'Manchesters' industrialised and became textile cities with globalisation of the cotton trade. As a result of political forces, all these centres in turn declined when the cotton industry was transformed by new technology. Newer cotton cities of South India and China now discard and recycle, reinvent and rebrand, displace migrants and outsource skills at alarming speeds of transition.

The film hints at patterns and continuities of cotton's reach as a commodity, which changes location and recycles economic models. The past repeats and exploits people in the present, though environmental awareness and sustainable objectives can be implemented where there are desire, support and infrastructure. Long after industrial decline, when buildings have been demolished, left to ruin or refurbished as malls or museums, inhabitants of textile cities recall sensory conditions of work: noise and movement inside mills, cotton diseases, weather and pollution, talk and songs, cooperatives and unions, inventive engineering attitudes and having an eye for fashion. Memorabilia – fragments of garments and tools – are kept and many live in the mill houses that survive. Cotton touches environment and population, global economics and politics, the nature of time and work, wealth and health. The industrial era is seldom mentioned now in Manchester, UK. Reinvented city identities incorporate it as

museum heritage. But while the young may not know mill history as their elders lived it, Cottonopolis is still there as a 'state of mind', for impressions of the 'great industry that once was' mingle with feelings of pride and loss for textile city inhabitants and are often carried by their descendants.

Cottonopolis concerns transference of memory and consciousness through material connection with cotton, from field to garment. It combines a poetics with cinematics, a 'warp and weft' choreographic structure, to weave its tale. Firstly, this is through cotton manufacture and people: growing, picking, ginning, carding, spinning, weaving, bleaching, dyeing, printing, designing, making, wearing, washing, discarding, recycling and preserving – filmed mostly in long takes. Secondly, there are elements of the global history of empire and slavery, cities copying the Manchester factory system, environment and energy infrastructure, political and social decline, sustainability and regeneration, machine-made and hand-made aesthetics, using combinations of stills, movie and archive. The observations of Kabir, Dickens, Engels, Lowry, Spender, Gandhi, Wajda and Kerouac give poignant detail of environment, consciousness and performativity of fabricating cotton. I see this as texture and experience subordinated to the third structural thread of sensory memory, using interview and conversations, songs, paintings and photographs, cartoons and cloth samples. These narratives construct a surprising and dramatic alternative historiography.

The film involves ethical questions, embroiled in narratives of factories past and present, because *Cottonopolis* is personal, evoking my own Lancashire cotton ancestors' lives and beguilement with cotton materials. Teaching and film industry links with Lodz and Ahmedabad shaped my desire to share stories and to film cotton processes first-hand. This is part way between an essay film and sensory historiography material culture ethnography (on new notions of the essay film, see Corrigan 2011). The dynamics expressed through film-making position cinematography as ethnography. The extract I have chosen to put on the DVD accompanying this volume includes eight sequences – Ginning cotton, Jacquard handloom, Making denim, Weavers and looms, *Bandhani* (tie-dye), Rats and ruins, Manufaktura, and Three interviews.

The sequences amplify aspects of filming, fieldwork and textural encounter; they are examples from the early editing stage and so only partially represent the film (for copyright reasons). My work encompasses industry cinematography, artist film-making and ethnographic documentary. Cinematography has always been for me a form of thinking which produces a particular kind of knowledge. This is not visual alone; it is very tactile and concerns how camera movement, framing and lighting affect meaning and alter space/time perception. Cinematography becomes synaesthetic when implicated in perceptive, embodied and affective events. A critically challenged ecology of images involves interdisciplinary re-imaginings and appropriations. Expressing the complicated fabric of stories required texturing a chronotope and aesthetic mirroring cotton processes. These encounters with the materiality of cotton and sensory memory invoked a redefinition of my working practice.

Ginning cotton

Ginning is a risky process as cotton dust is carcinogenic. The bale-making area is very dusty, with cotton flying everywhere. Workers have only makeshift masks. The noise is deafening. The temperature is forty-five degrees and the floors are slippery. I record birds chirping, mixed with men shouting and steam wheezing into mounds of fluff. At every stage I follow the cotton. I am covered in it and my throat is very dry. I throw my mask away and abandon the tripod to get in and 'inspect' the cotton, watching faces and hands. I get permissions with stories and pictures of old Lancashire mills and my 1900s relatives. I am aware of 'spinning' stories and 'texturing' events. Workers check my shots to see if I've 'shown the process right' and take pictures of me on their mobiles. Alfred Gell describes the Epicurean view: 'to see (or to know) is to be sensuously filled with that which is perceived' (1998: 100). He says that Lucretius 'draws analogies between vision by means of "idols" and other physical forms of diffusion into the ambience, particularly smell and smoke, as well as the shedding of skins, rinds, and films from the surfaces of things (Gell 1998: 105). Laura Marks discovers 'haptic visuality' in intercultural and experimental film, using the metaphor of film as skin (2000: 191). I am dreaming of flying cotton, waterfalls of steam and cotton, and its taste and smell.

Jacquard handloom

The clickety-clack-drop sound of handlooms emanates from windows in the village. The weavers' skills with rich colours and intensity of pattern overwhelm me in comparison with the power-loom factories. I am obsessed with varied speeds, images and sounds of machine/factory time and the ingenuity of home-made engineering. Attention to detail and hand–eye coordination for weaving remind me of camerawork and commercial film-making rules. John Ellis posits countering the vogue for fast editing in documentaries and instead using 'slow cinema' techniques such as long takes (2012: 97). *Cottonopolis* is 'made by hand', allowing for textural possibility, and despite observing constraints of capital over labour, I have come to realise its variety of time experience fuels this creativity. Shamji Vishram, Kutch master weaver, says 'the power-loom has only one song; it tires the mind … but in handloom if you stop, you might be playing for a while and the mind freshens … sometimes the design and count change the sound and this is a voice for the handloom' (interview, 2012).

Making denim

Aamir Akhtar recalls Ahmedabad's old nickname, 'Manchester, like other such connotations, like Mecca, or like Heaven … so Manchester is to textiles what Mecca is to the believer … in the Indian context, textiles was to Ahmedabad' (interview, 2010). Time is expressed in

the texts and textures of *Cottonopolis* participants: historical, ancestral, political, economic, traumatic, meditative time. Hamid Naficy posits that filmed 'chronotopes are organizing centres ... not just visual, but synaesthetic, involving the entire human sensorium and memory ... temporality often structures feeling' (2001: 153). I look for close-ups that have a mesmeric and musical quality, and cotton slides, rushes or jabs through frame. Sometimes surfaces must be clean and smooth to see beneath or to hear sounds more clearly; sometimes light must disappear, leaving the dark screen for a few seconds. Texture works with beat, timing and rhythm across the screen surface, in both on-screen and off-screen space, through the body as sound, as energy patterns resonating and reverberating. Patterns of colour generate energy across the screen surface, something Impressionist and Fauvist painters noticed. Erin Manning writes about Australian (Aboriginal) painter Dorothy Napangardi's black and white paintings mapping 'dreamings' of her 'country' as 'resonant grids ... in a process of "unraveling"' (Manning 1998: 187). Seeing checked shirting patterns appear at great speed from a floor of thundering, vibrating looms is a wonder I have never seen before.

Weavers and looms

Charles Dickens in *Hard Times* describes the fictional Coketown (based on Preston, near Manchester) as 'a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of building full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down, like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness' (2003 [1854]: 27). An Indian-like metaphor, it seems to me. Gilles Deleuze uses the idea of the *fold* or the *unanime pli* (the universal pleat) as history arriving through rupture rather than continuity. He describes a loom, its warp and weft, and the sudden break of thread by an accumulation of forces and timings (1998: 30). When composing, health and safety dictates where I can stand; the weaver or the loom point of view. It prescribes my space of action. Film-maker K. P. Jayasankar describes its complexity as a 'space of dynamism ... twinning and dichotomies ... a dialectical space ... of nothingness, but all these forces ... together [in] that fabric' (interview, 2010).

Bandhani (tie-dye)

Each type of knotting and tying produces an audible squeaking, pulling, stretching sound along with boiling water, pouring water from metal pans and plastic buckets, clipping up cloths and pinging out knots to open up the designs. Cinematography is 'writing-with-light-in-movement'. It is not writing or text. I am more aware of the screen (particularly thinking back to film rather than video) as 'imbued' with colour and light. Before bleaching and dyeing, calico is known as 'grey cloth'. *Cottonopolis* has a chromatic plan which passes from grey to colour. The ability of the high-definition camera

to register extremes of contrast and light surprises me. Cathryn Vasseleu writes: 'texture is at once the cloth, threads, knots, weave, detailed surface, material, matrix and frame.... In its texture, light is a fabrication, a surface of a depth that also spills over and passes through the interstices of the fabric.... As a texture, the naturalness of light cannot be divorced from its historical and embodied circumstances' (1998: 12).

Rats and ruins

Memories emerge through the retelling, while a good raconteur's stories have to be edited down to sound-bite size to work in a film. This tampers with the texture of the original recording. Using stills was not initially intended, but this camera shoots stills and video, and I walk among mill ruins seemingly experiencing palimpsests of participants' stories. Tim Edensor finds 'the charged sensuality of ruins, the prevalence of initially overpowering smells, profuse and intrusive textures, surfaces, peculiar and delicate soundscapes, and perplexing visual objects, juxtapositions and vistas, all at variance to the sensually ordered world outside' (2005: 144). He claims 'involuntary memories can come upon us, blasting us back to the past ... while ruins are cluttered with visually fascinating scenes and can be densely read for signs of allegorical and symbolic significance ... the sensual impact of ruined space can overwhelm a scopic approach' (Edensor 2005 : 91). Painters and photographers have been drawn to 'Manchesters' by the range of light, smoggy skies and colouration and monumental buildings. My cinematic mills sit against skies now clear where smog once hung. The Lancashire dialect poem 'Owdham' (anonymous, 1880s, sometimes sung to a tune by Harry Boardman) describes the pride of Oldham. One stanza reads:

> Hoo needs no shade from leafy trees,
> Wi smook clouds o'er her curlin',
> Hoo never misses the hum o' bees,
> Wi countless spindles twirlin',
> Her restless engines grind and pound,
> Like waves on shingle breakin',
> An' nob'dy wants a sweeter sound,
> Nor th' song her looms are makin'.

Manufaktura

Archive stills have their own quality and in the case of faces need more time on the screen. Women posing holding shuttles make me think of my mother's aunts, who worked in mills from the age of twelve. Lancashire's wealth was built on slave labour but also on the labour of 400,000 young girls. The texture of the interview, with all its hesitations and repetitions, is real and complete, with narratives and emotional affect unfolding in real time. T. Minh-ha quotes the word for 'speech' (*haala*) in the West African Fulfulde language as having the 'connotation of "giving strength," of "making material." Speech is the materialization, externalization, and internalization of the vibrations of forces'. She relates this to the movement of weavers' feet going up and down, 'the symbolism of the loom ... based on creative speech in action' (1989: 127). 'We differ in the content of words, in the

construction and weaving of sentences but most of all ... in the choice and mixing of utterances, the ethos, the tones, the paces, the cuts, the pauses' (Minh-ha, 1989: 2). I try to solicit sensory testimony, but this just seeps out and bubbles up.

Three interviews

Aditi Ranjan finds textiles are 'very tactile ... one can hear prayer flags in Ladakh flutter ... many textiles look like they are edible ... or can be associated with smell such as sweet or pungent ... textiles are a medium of communication' (interview, 2010). Objects survive when environments have disappeared. These interviewees are concerned with recycling and sustaining values, qualities of cotton and particular memories. The idea of making-do or making something from what you have is prevalent among elderly Lancashire participants, who remember how to make lace tatting or to carve spindles. Everyone tells me this is an Indian cultural habit, which rubs off on me while filming. My great grandmother ran a mill-side drapery shop which sold 'fents', end-of-roll offcuts, from which people would make patched shirts. Describing Anjali Monteiro and K. P. Jayasankar's documentary work, Anne Rutherford discusses their 'affectively-saturated encounter with the image', a contemplative stance towards the phenomenal material world, their intended 'vulnerability to the image' (Rutherford 2006: 29). She argues this 'experience of the auratic ... by allowing the image to speak ... to come alive, the audience is allowed to take in ... its feel, its texture, its rhythm, to come alive with it ... [a] film opens up the mutability of the material in its reception' (Rutherford 2006: 36). I find new ways to improvise, finding unexpected cinematographic paths. Following cotton itself allows for an 'exploring of cinema's tactility which opens up the possibility of cinema as an "intimate" experience'. As Jennifer Barker describes it, 'We "share" things with it: texture, spatial orientation, comportment, rhythm, and vitality' (2009: 2). This expands my ethnographic field, in that sensory and particularly textural dimensions begin to emerge with the participants. In *Cottonopolis* the vision and editing involve associative rather than progressive connection, much in the way a weaver scans cloth emerging from the loom (though of course there is planning in the prior lacing of threads and colour). This is an attempt to fuse the ethnographic and essayistic through a focus on the sensory texture of experience and memory, rather than text.

Interviewees

- Aamir Akhtar, Arvind Denim, Ahmedabad, December 2010.
- K. P. Jayasankar, Tata Institute, Mumbai, August 2010.
- Aditi Ranjan, National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, December 2010.
- Shamji Vishram, Harris Museum, Preston, September 2012.

Archive

Manufaktura and Lodz skyline stills from Museum of Textiles, Lodz, Poland.

17 · *Christmas with Wawa*: a video experiment with Yolngu aesthetics

Jennifer Deger

As a long-time scholar of indigenous media, until quite recently it had never occurred to me to attempt my own film about Yolngu culture. In fact, I had established a career premised precisely on not doing that. But after more than fifteen years of working on Yolngu media projects as a producer and trainer – adhering as closely as possible to the 'black hands on camera' edict that accompanied the rise of remote Aboriginal media in Australia in the late 1980s and the 1990s – I found myself increasingly interested in responding 'in-kind' to image worlds I work within.

Compelled by the potential of video to produce both meaningful forms of social engagement with Yolngu and alternative kinds of scholarly insight, I have begun to initiate shared film and visual arts projects in Arnhem Land and, on occasion, to take up the camera for my own purposes. *Christmas with Wawa* was the first of these works. It is a small experiment with video, colour and Yolngu ritual aesthetics. I made it to test the possibilities of video (and specifically post-production effects) as a means of rendering specifically Yolngu 'ways of seeing' for non-Yolngu audiences. I saw this process also as an opportunity to add another dimension to relationships with Yolngu friends and colleagues already profoundly mediated by images.

Up to that point in my research, every video project I had undertaken had been not only directed by Yolngu, but had been made with their kin and communities intended as the primary audiences. They were filmed, edited and distributed with a commitment to privileging local narrative structures and aesthetics over the needs and expectations of other viewers. In the process of facilitating these projects I helped to produce material for my own analysis.

Christmas with Wawa was different. It was conceived, filmed and edited (in a Manchester hotel room prior to the conference from which this book emerged) with no direct input from Yolngu. The family who took part in the filming had no clear conception of what would become of the footage. Indeed, at when I shot it in December 2006, I was not quite sure either.

As an experiment with what Paul Carter (2004) calls 'material thinking', I wanted to use video production techniques to communicate something of what I had come to know and value about Yolngu ritual. I wanted to take a different tack to most of the existing analysis by building on David MacDougall's insights into the way that film conveys impressions, experiences and understandings that are inherently beyond articulation (MacDougall, 2005). Video seemed to offer a means of responding to aspects of Yolngu ritual on something closer to its own terms. By highlighting interplay between feeling and meaning as socially productive, I hoped to offer non-Yolngu audiences an experiential encounter with what is often, much more abstractly, referred to in the literature as the 'ancestral'.

The resulting short film, *Christmas with Wawa*, deliberately sidesteps not only text, but spoken language altogether. Following what I have come to know about Yolngu pedagogic imperatives, it pursues a see-for-yourself epistemology that values experiential truths over explanation or analysis. There are no voice-overs, no interviews, no observed conversations, no titles, no captions, no credits (although words do matter a great deal as lyrics in the soundtrack, as I will describe below). Instead, the film invests in the sensuous, the affective, the associative and the emergent. For this is an attempt to make a film with Yolngu aesthetics, rather than a documentary about them.

Lights, tinsel, presence

Wawa is the word for 'brother' in the Yolngu dialects of north-east Arnhem Land. In the title of this little film, *Christmas with Wawa*, it refers to Bangana Wunungmurra, my first video collaborator and a respected young leader from the Dhalwangu clan. A close friend and advisor, Bangana adopted me into his family when I first worked as an ethnographer and media trainer-producer in Gapuwiyak in the mid-1990s (Deger 2006). I shot the footage for this project with his wife, Susan Marrawakamirr, and his children, six years after Bangana's death from a heart attack at the age of thirty-seven. Having spent several Christmases with them in the years following this sudden and unexpected loss, I had come to appreciate the ways they made Christmas a time to explicitly foreground his absence and the difficult emotions associated with this. What struck me most about their version of Christmas – as both profoundly moving and culturally particular – were the ways in which the family mobilised lights, colour, music and shared sorrow to lay the grounds for a seasonal 'joy' of a very different order to the consumerist excesses of a mainstream Australian Christmas.

Missionaries introduced Christmas to Yolngu in first half of the twentieth century. Since then, this celebration of the birth of Christ has been linked to the arrival of the wet season. Yolngu begin to prepare for Christmas when they hear the first thunderclouds in mid-October. They continue through December, when life-giving rain finally issues forth from 'pregnant' clouds and the dramatic annual rebirth of the land

occurs. And so the material poetics season of vibrant renewal has become also a time to revitalise family relationships, most particularly with the dead.

Bangana is buried only metres from his family home. His spirit resides in the clan well of his ancestral homelands (and for the more devout Christians in the family, and without necessary contradiction, also in heaven). As the weeks count down to Christmas his family decorates his grave and their home while Mariah Carey's 'All I Want For Christmas Is You' and 'Christmas Without You' by Kenny Rogers and Dolly Parton are played over and over again on the stereo.[1] During this time, the family will often sit together looking at family photographs. Stroking Bangana's image, sometimes talking to him, they quietly bring themselves to tears. This work of what Yolngu call *warrwuyun* or worry provides the foundation for celebrations to follow. For without a fulsome and shared embrace of sorrow, loss and longing, there can be no properly satisfying turn towards what Yolngu have identified as the central joy of Christmas.

These rituals follow an aesthetic arc familiar from more traditional ceremonies. Tinsel, lights, songs and photographs combine to produce a field of intensified sensation and emotion to enact what Howard Morphy (1989) describes in the context of Yolngu art as a movement from 'dull to brilliant'. Ritually charged as sites of potency and emergence, homes and gravesites become tremulous sites of absence–presence. Together, the music, the colour, the photographs and the 'sensation of light' produce a particular aesthetic effect on, or within, the viewer that anthropologist Donald Thomson translated as the 'up lift of viewing' that gives rise to experiences of seeing the ancestral.[2] Such effects are not confined to human subjects. As Yolngu have described it to me, the ritualised sorrow, longing and luminosity produce a field of attraction that 'draws everything near'. In this way the family produces an encompassing field of 'Christmas spirit'. By ritually charging the home and graves as sites of amplified potency and ancestral emergence, Bangana's spirit is drawn close as an invisible yet sometimes palpable co-presence.

Colour and relational vision

Christmas With Wawa attempts to respond to – and work with – these synaesthetic dynamics of connection. Following the structure of the ritual itself, the video builds 'from dull to brilliant' through transformative work of 'feeling'.[3]

Colour is key. The Yolngu word for colour is *miny'tji*. *Miny'tji* also translates as 'pattern'.[4] From the flashing orbs of light that open the film, through to the surge to full colour in the family photograph, colour is mobilised to produce a field of bright allure and relationship. Aided by post-production techniques, colour (or the lack thereof) manifests an ontological spectrum beyond the reach of the camera itself, a sensorial field that exceeds the manifestly visible. And, indeed, the strictly sensible.

Colour patterns relationships and meaning in other ways too. Red – that very particularly Christmassy hue – has special meanings for Bangana's clan, who use red

cloth and red things to manifest a shared ancestral identity. The colour of Dhalwangu clan knowledge and power, red is associated with a shared way of being and feeling, along with a shared set of stories, places and designs. Dhalwangu people wear red clothing to embody these relations. They fly red flags that dance in the wind over their graves.

In the video, the tickle of red tinsel over the black-and-white family photograph materialises these connections anew. It draws inspiration from a cultural imaginary that has taken up the multi-hued adornments of consumer modernity as a means of infusing the world with pattern, potency and meaning, to animate relationships, affinities and affections.[5]

There are other connections to be made in the footage itself, some of which are directly accessible to the non-local viewer and some of which are not. These extend from fairly obvious connections between the father and Father Christmas, but here the Santa attached to the house door marks a transitional point between the inside (which Yolngu identify more generally as deep and more sacred) and the outside (public and profane), to the connections between the shot of the flag pole (barely recognisable) at the grave decorated with a cascade of flashing stars that appears towards the end of the film. As meanings to be recognised – or not – by viewers, they provide another dimension of the participatory vision that the video attempts to both show and invite. While it is necessary to point out here that Bangana's name means 'tip of the flagpole' and Susan's ancestral legacy includes the source of shooting stars, for Yolngu it is precisely the way in which these meanings (and many others) can be seen and quietly recognised by those in the know that imbues the imagery with a particular and specifically local resonance. Throughout, Mariah Carey's song plays out in a Yolngu key, claiming the co-constitutive emotional spectrum of sorrow, longing and joy. With its energetic 'uplift' and catchy – if decontextualised – familiarity, the song activates the resonant space of 'same but different' that vitalises many aspects of Yolngu ritual and creative endeavour.

Participant imagining

In his ground-breaking account of the 'Aboriginal Invention of Television' (1986), Eric Michaels describes how shaky camera pans across a seemingly empty landscape actually follow the invisible tracks of ancestral events, enabling Warlpiri viewers to read epic stories in what otherwise looks like a home movie 'in the most banal sense' (see Michaels 1994: 116).

My experiment with Yolngu home-movie-making seeks to expand this sense of the co-constitutive visual dynamic between viewer and image and ancestral action while it stands provocatively askew from conventional approaches to either ethnographic film or indigenous media research. To work with visual media on the terms of the local in north-east Arnhem Land is to become a creative participant in a sensuous economy

that challenges the established position of the indigenous media scholar as activist/documentarian of alternative worldviews and cultural politics – and the now deeply entrenched cultural politics regarding the rights to film and represent Aboriginal people. Indeed, Yolngu themselves are by no means invested in maintaining clear-cut distinctions between the native's point of view and that of the anthropologist. But as I have described, taking up video with a 'Yolngu eye' involves more than documenting or archiving culture from a position of long-term familiarity or 'insiderness'. It involves more than simply producing film in respectful accordance with the political and social dynamics that shape its subjects' lives. The camera does not mimic the Yolngu eye. Rather, music and post-production effects enliven images in what I have argued is a distinctly Yolngu way. While showing the playful Yolngu genius for ritual elaboration and intercultural incorporation, it enacts central ritual dynamics, thickening the Yolngu world with spectral register that exceeds that which the camera alone can record, or what the stranger's eye can perceive.

As I film and edit, I assume the position as both a feelingful and a knowing subject claiming and affirming my relationships through aesthetic elaboration. My Yolngu kin have both recognised and encouraged this project. They live with a culturally honed appreciation of the participatory, layered and idiosyncratic nature of viewing and the way in which each person must 'complete' an image by looking deeper into and perceiving what is not evident on the surface, or via a casual glance (Deger 2006, 2011a). They understand the dynamics of 'vision' as a powerful and constitutive form of social participation, as much as a source of particular kinds of knowledge. They make and seek out videos that trigger internal processes of revelatory 'seeing' in which memory, imagination and revelations generated through ancestral agency combine to allow perception beyond the camera's frame and beneath the surface of the screen.

If there is one thing I have learned from the Yolngu reticence in relation to direct explanation, it is that to pin down and spell out certain things – be they ghosts or poetry – is to kill them. Images, as MacDougall (2005) also counsels, must be allowed to claim their own life. This requires film-makers to avoid overinterpreting their work, to be wary of foreclosing meaning or dictating effect (not that this is ever entirely possible). And yet I write and explain! My motivation comes from my experiences of showing this film in a variety of non-Yolngu contexts: it has become clear that, despite the capacity of people to pick up the general meaning of the film, the work as it stands is not adequate to its analytic ambitions. All too often I have found it dismissed by audiences, even those who are purportedly directly interested in aesthetics. I write here in an attempt to provide enough in the way of background and imaginative stimuli to incite a certain kind of receptivity, to encourage others to look beyond its apparent 'banality' and bad movie-making.[6]

I conclude with a caveat. While wanting to encourage others to creatively consider the possibilities of an audio-visual ethnography 'in kind' within their own research, I worry about inciting a turn to the aesthetic at the expense of the political and the ethical. In my work the complex and loaded politics of image-making that led me to

the study of indigenous media in the first place remain as salient and challenging as ever. In fact, these weigh on me more than ever, as I take on responsibility for not only creating but also circulating and reproducing images. Within a local visual economy that is already complex and highly politicised, the trajectories of the digital raise a raft of new potential problems as much as new creative possibilities. Although there is no space to elaborate specifics here, I want to underline surely the most basic of points, namely that the kinds of creative freedom and aesthetic experimentation that digital technology enables should not release researchers from the responsibility of critically considering the power relations enacted through the camera and other acts of viewing.

In the case of this little film, I reproduce it here – but not on YouTube – as determined by discussions with Marrawakamirr and her family, who as image-subjects have more rights on local terms than the person who actually shot them (i.e. me). The rights they bequeath me here come as a result of my own personal and creative involvement with them and, of course, with Bangana. At that level, the film has come to function as much as a form of ongoing ethnographic engagement as anthropological analysis. A form of participant imagining, *Christmas with Wawa* claims my place as located and engaged social subject operating with Yolngu in an ever more rich and expanding digital visual economy.

Completed in 2007, the film now marks a tentative first step in what has become a much larger and longer-term exploration. Much more effectively than anything I have ever written, the making of this film communicated my project-in-process to my adopted Yolngu kin. While no doubt the work reveals the limits of my perceptual-imaginative capacities – not to mention the limits of my camera skills – over repeated screenings it has generated discussion and further insight into what Yolngu themselves see in my images beyond my own intentions. For instance, Bangana's son connected the slow flashing Christmas lights that open and close the film with the eyes of the Dhalwangu ancestral octopus, which change colour according to its mood (or when provoked by others).

At the same time, *Christmas with Wawa* stimulated new kinds of creative response among Yolngu. As a result of showing it in Gapuwiyak, my experiment with Yolngu aesthetics became a catalyst for new kinds of participatory video production. The result has been a multimedia exhibition, 'Christmas Birrimbirr' (Christmas Spirit), and a feature-length documentary, *Manapanmirr, in Christmas Spirit*, both of which considerably extend my original idea in scale, form and content.[7] Exceeding anything that I could have envisioned or produced alone, these projects resonate with meaning and emotion for both Yolngu and non-Aboriginal audiences in ways that further strengthen my appreciation of – and commitment to – the powerfully generative possibilities of this kind of intercultural image work.

Notes

1 The film's title dances my own little mimetic jig with 'Christmas Without You', a song I must now have heard hundreds of times.
2 See discussion in Deger (2006: 192–193).
3 This analysis is deeply indebted to Diana Young's work on the materiality of colour (Young 2006).
4 It can refer to sacred clan designs, but the meaning encompasses designs and patterns of all sorts.
5 See Deger (forthcoming) for a detailed analysis of the role of colour in another newly adopted Yolngu ritual: the birthday party.
6 Even when I pre-position the project as I have here, many remain actively resistant to the fact of a non-Aboriginal person undertaking such a project and refuse to concede the validity of the project. Inevitably, perhaps, others look past my own theoretical framing to interpret the tinsel and songs as manifest evidence of culture loss and criticise my celebration of what they see as the demise of Aboriginal tradition. Others, though, have cried in response, a reaction that has greatly interested my Yolngu kin and which, while requiring more careful analysis than I have space for here, seems to affirm the promise of the project.
7 Created by Miyarrka Media, a collective of Yolngu and non-Yolngu artists and film-makers formed in the course of this project, the work was directed by Paul Gurrumuruwuy and filmed by video artist David Makenzie.

18 · Sensing cultures: cinema, ethnography and the senses

David Howes

> The *forming of the five senses* is a labor of the entire history of the world down to the present.
> Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (Marx 1987 [1844]: 109, original emphasis)

> If a revolt is to come, it will have to come from the five senses!
> Michel Serres, *Angels: A Modern Myth* (Serres 2005: 71)

Anthropology has been concerned with issues of the senses and sense perception since its inception. W. H. R. Rivers' role in the 1898 Cambridge expedition to the Torres Strait was primarily to coordinate a wide range of experiments involving such apparatuses as Lovibond's tintometer, the Müller-Lyer illusion, Zwaardemaker's olfactometer, Politzer's Hörmesser (for measuring auditory acuity), various taste solutions, an algometer (for determining pain thresholds) and so forth. The objective was to find out whether the senses of 'primitive man' were keener than those of 'civilised man', as the anecdotal reports of various missionaries and other travellers had suggested. The way Rivers put the purpose of the experiments to his research subjects was as follows:[1]

> The natives were told that some people had said that the black man could see and hear, etc., better than the white man and that we had come to find out how clever they were, and that their performances would all be described in a big book so that everyone would read about them. This appealed to the vanity of the people and put them on their mettle. (Rivers 1901: 3)

French anthropology of the late nineteenth century was equally preoccupied with the measurement of the senses of the 'savage races' (Dias 2004). Meanwhile, on the other side of the Atlantic, it was in order to explore certain questions having to do with the psychophysics of vision that the young Franz Boas first went to the Arctic to study the Inuit. Once there, he converted from psychology to ethnology (much like Rivers did in the course of the Cambridge expedition) but his interest in perception persisted.

Boas's first published paper was a piece called 'On Alternating Sounds' (1889), which concerned the 'mishearing' of sounds in a foreign language as a consequence of the speaker 'apperceiving' them in light of the known sounds of his or her own language.

'Sensory anthropology' thus has a long history. One could say that all anthropology was sensory anthropology, in the beginning. This focus on gauging the senses was eclipsed, though, in the early decades of the twentieth century by a new focus on social organisation or 'function'. The functionalist paradigm was in turn eclipsed by a new focus on 'interpretation' in the 1970s, under the influence of Clifford Geertz. Geertz famously introduced the notion of the culture of a people as 'an ensemble of texts', which the anthropologist 'strains to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong' (Geertz 1973: 452). The idea of cultures 'as texts' and so of 'reading culture' flourished for a spell and then morphed into the paradigm of 'writing culture' in the mid-1980s as anthropology came to be redefined as a 'process of textualization' (Clifford and Marcus 1986). This turn ushered in a heady period of experimentation with different styles of writing, which persisted into the twenty-first century (Howes 2003: ch. 1).

The 2007 'Beyond Text?' conference heralded the arrival of a new model for anthropological understanding, which could be called 'sensing culture'. This arrival marked both a return to anthropology as it was in the beginning – when sensation, not interpretation or textualisation, was the primary object and means of inquiry – and a radical departure from the prevailing paradigms of anthropological theory and practice. Hence the excitement that suffused the atmosphere at 'Beyond Text?' – the sense of something new unfolding. The number of registrations far exceeded the organisers' expectations and many had to be turned away. But the organisers should not have been surprised. The time had come for taking stock of the senses.

The consolidation of visual anthropology

What put the senses (back) at the heart of anthropological inquiry? The return of the senses was partly a reaction against the excesses of textualism.[2] Things had reached the point where some theorists seriously thought and wrote as if *il n'y a pas de hors-texte* ('there is no outside-text')! Thus, in 'Post-modern Ethnography', Stephen Tyler proclaimed that 'Perception has nothing to do with it' (the 'it' being ethnography):

> An ethnography is no account of a rationalized movement from percept to concept. It begins and ends in concepts. There is no origin in perception, no priority of vision, and no data of observation....
>
> [An ethnography] is not a record of experience at all; it is the means of experience. That experience became experience only in the writing of the ethnography. Before that it was only a disconnected array of chance happenings. (Tyler 1986: 138)

This banishment of 'perception' and 'experience' in the name of 'text' and 'narrative' (or 'discourse') was bound to precipitate a counter-reaction. But the 'Beyond Text?'

conference did not just put the logocentrism and the privileging of writing within mainstream anthropology into question. Deconstructive it was not. Rather, what the conference signalled was the consolidation of visual anthropology and the positing of 'the model of the viewfinder' (in contrast to 'the model of the text') as a paradigm for anthropological reflection.

Intimations of this revolt against the tyranny of the text had been building for some time. In 'Iconophobia', Lucien Castaing-Taylor cried out against the denigration of film by the likes of Maurice Bloch and Kirsten Hastrup, extolled the 'apparent affinity of film with life itself' and went on to advance the idea that 'ethnography can itself be conducted filmically' (Castaing-Taylor 1996). True to his word, in 2006 Castaing-Taylor established the Sensory Ethnography Lab (SEL) at Harvard University. Its mandate:

> [to promote] innovative combinations of aesthetics and ethnography. It uses analog and digital media to explore the aesthetics and ontology of the natural and unnatural world. Harnessing perspectives drawn from the arts, the social and natural sciences, and the humanities, the SEL encourages attention to the many dimensions of the world, both animate and inanimate, that may only with difficulty, if it all, be rendered with propositional prose. Most works produced in the SEL take as their subject the bodily praxis and affective fabric of human and animal existence. (http://sel.fas.harvard.edu)

In a similar vein, in *The Ethnographer's Eye*, Anna Grimshaw (2001) proposes a novel reading of the history of modern anthropology – as a succession of 'ways of seeing'. She begins by analysing the distinctive 'visions' of Rivers and Malinowski, which she relates to different trends in modernist art and cinema. In the latter half of the book, she discusses the cinematic and epistemological breakthroughs made by a series of ethnographic film-makers, from Jean Rouch to the team of Judith and David MacDougall.

In the case of the MacDougalls, Grimshaw traces how their film style evolved from 'observational cinema' (e.g. *To Live With Herds: A Dry Season among the Jie*, 1971) to 'participatory' or 'conversational cinema' (e.g. the *Turkana Conversations* trilogy, 1979), hence a shift 'from vision towards voice', then 'a return to a preoccupation with vision' and 'observational cinema' in *Photo Wallahs* (1991), a film about the history of photography in a Himalayan resort (Grimshaw 2001: 138, 145). In its concern with evoking an indigenous aesthetic, however, the latter film did not look back so much as forward to the next phase in David MacDougall's film career, which is best described as 'sensational cinema'.

What makes David MacDougall's more recent work, such as *Doon School Chronicles* (2000), so sensational is its focus on 'aesthetic features' (in contrast to the theme of the 'seasonal cyle' or that of 'conversation' in his and Judith's earlier work).[3] This film about the renowned residential boys' secondary school situated near Mussoorie in the foothills of the Himalayas highlights the 'social aesthetics' or 'culturally patterned sensory experience' of school life, including 'the design of buildings and grounds, the use of clothing and colors, the rules of dormitory life, the organization of students' time, particular styles of speech and gesture, and the many rituals of everyday life that

accompany such activities as eating, school gatherings, and sport' (MacDougall 2005: 98). All of these 'aesthetic features' are held by MacDougall to be influential in their own right, and not simply 'the symbolic expression of more profound forces (such as history and ideology)'. He writes:

> What is interesting sociologically is the extent to which these aesthetic patterns may influence events and decisions in a community, along with the other more commonly recognized social forces of history, economics, politics, and ideology. All these forces are, of course, interconnected, but it often seems that the aesthetic features of a society are too easily assimilated into other categories, to such an extent that they become invisible or ignored. (MacDougall 2005: 98)

In 2005, MacDougall came out with *The Corporeal Image: Film, Ethnography, and the Senses*. This book sets out the socio-aesthetic theory that informs *Doon School Chronicles* and also makes many robust claims for the sensuous in anthropology, with film being the primary medium for conveying sense experience. For example, the second chapter is entitled 'Voice and Vision'. It consists of a sustained reflection on the contrasts between text and image, narrative and film, with respect to conveying and fostering the analysis of complex social events. Not surprisingly, in view of his *métier*, MacDougall comes down firmly in favour of film. This is on account of film's intrinsic multimodality. However, as can be seen in the following passage, he remains conscious of the experiential limits of film even as he extols its sensory extensivity relative to the printed page:

> one of the distinctive things about film is its routine mixing of different modes of thought and perception. There is a continuous interplay among its varied forms of address – the aural with the visual, the sensory with the verbal, the narrative with the pictorial. There is a semblance of this interplay in literature, as well, but it is actually a construction of the writer's and reader's imaginations, since the actual form of address, words on a page, remains constant. Although films still have a comparatively limited experiential range (one does not smell the flowers in a film, or speak with others, or touch, or feel touched), they do offer the spectator some insight into the integrated and often confusing social reality faced by the protagonists. Writing can provide the jolt of a physical encounter, but films provide a flow of sensory (and other) experiences that requires considerable application to derive from writing. (MacDougall 2005: 52)

What is noteworthy about this passage is its cross-modal reflexivity – that is, its second-order reflections regarding the sensory/experiential range of the medium of film (in contrast to the medium of writing) and the idea of 'interplay'. For MacDougall, visual anthropology is sensory anthropology.

The same opening towards the other senses can be observed in Anna Grimshaw's work. *The Ethnographer's Eye* was the first book in visual anthropology to theorise the epistemological possibilities of 'visualising anthropology' in a comprehensive way. In her subsequent work, though, visualisation has increasingly come to mean the sensualisation of knowing and of how anthropologists ought to communicate what they know. Thus, in the 'Introduction' to *Visualizing Anthropology*, 'visualisation' is defined as 'going beyond the narrow concerns of ocularity to investigate ways

of knowing located in the body and in the senses' (Grimshaw and Ravetz 2005: 2). Or again, 'questions of the visual' are to be 'interpreted broadly as about embodied and sensory-based ways of knowing' (Grimshaw 2005: 25). Using a camera, that is, practising observational cinema, instead of a pen is important to her because of the way it 'positions oneself differently in the world' and enables a shift from the conventional 'word-sentence to an image-sequence approach' to knowledge production (Grimshaw 2007: 199). Sarah Pink makes a similar case in *The Future of Visual Anthropology: Engaging the Senses* (Pink 2006) and *Doing Sensory Ethnography* (Pink 2009).

Ways of sensing

The new visual anthropology – that is, visual anthropology since the sensory turn discussed above – involves treating film (and photography) as primary documents, as it were, rather than secondary to, or illustrative of, the arguments of some text. It also involves treating such forces as 'history' or 'ideology' as internal to the aesthetic, or 'interconnected' with the aesthetic, rather than constituting some deeper, 'more profound' reality (MacDougall 2005, 28). Some may see this development, this 'aestheticisation' of anthropology, as a reductive move when compared with the focus on social organisation in social anthropology proper. Others (myself included) see it as testifying to the indissociability of 'the social and the sensible' (Laplantine 2006) and so to the social pre-formation of the senses. As Constance Classen observes in 'Foundations for an Anthropology of the Senses':

> sensory perception is a cultural, as well as a physical, act. That is, sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell are not only means of apprehending physical phenomena, but also avenues for the transmission of cultural values.... Given that perception is conditioned by culture, it follows that the ways in which people perceive the world [that is, the ways in which they know how to use their senses] may vary as cultures vary. (Classen 1997: 401)

Every act of sensing has a social lining, as well as a psychological and a physical lining. There is no 'innocent eye', or ear, or nose, etc.; there are only 'period eyes' and ears, and noses, etc. To put this another way, the senses – including their 'extensions' (McLuhan 1964) in the form of video cameras or audio tape-recorders and other such technologies of registration – have become both the object and the means of anthropological inquiry (see Robben and Sluka 2007: part VIII).

Conceiving of media as 'extensions of the senses', after McLuhan, underlines both the rootedness of the media in bodily praxis and the way in which the senses 'mediate' experience.[4] The body and senses, as conditioned by culture, are humanity's 'first and most natural technical object, and at the same time technical means' (i.e. first *technologies*) – as Marcel Mauss (2007: 56) famously proclaimed in 'Techniques of the Body'. The implication is that cultures consist of sometimes similar, sometimes

contrasting 'ways of sensing' (Finnegan 2002; Howes 1991; Howes and Classen 2013) and the primary task of anthropology is to analyse how people make sense of the world – that is, how they construct 'worlds of sense' out of the ways in which they know how to use their senses (Classen 1993). François Laplantine puts this point well in his definition of ethnography as a form of participant sensation in *Le social et le sensible: introduction à une anthropologie modale* (recently translated into English under the title *The Life of the Senses*):

> The experience of fieldwork is an experience of sharing in the sensible [*partage du sensible*]. We observe, we listen, we speak with others, we partake of their cuisine, we try to feel along with them what they experience. (Laplantine 2015: 2; see further Robben and Slukka 2007)

This idea of ethnography as sensing,[5] or 'feeling along with' people, which is so fundamental to the anthropology of the senses (see Geurts 2002), also has a political dimension, for if the sensorium is a social formation, it follows that the perceptual is political. The ostensible immediacy of sense experience must not be allowed to distract us from its constructed character (Wolff, this volume, Chapter 19). As Classen observes, when we examine the meanings vested in different sensory faculties and sensations across cultures:

> we find a cornucopia of potent sensory symbolism. Sight may be linked to reason or to witchcraft, taste may be used as a metaphor for aesthetic discrimination or for sexual experience, an odour may signify sanctity or sin, political power or social exclusion. Together, these sensory meanings and values form the *sensory model* espoused by a society, according to which the members of that society 'make sense' of the world, or translate sensory perceptions and concepts into a particular 'worldview.' There will likely be challenges to this model from within the society – persons and groups who differ on certain sensory values – yet this model will provide the basic perceptual paradigm to be followed or resisted. (Classen 1997: 402)

Taking stock of the senses thus involves recognising the intrinsic sociality of sensation, or what Laplantine (2015) calls 'the politics of the sensible'.

Critical faculties

The 2007 'Beyond Text?' conference was a watershed moment in the history of anthropology because it was the first conference to be explicitly and wholly dedicated to taking stock of the senses *in* anthropology. It took place at the University of Manchester in association with the Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology, widely recognised as the world's leading centre for visual anthropology for over twenty years. The conference was not solely dedicated to visual anthropology, however. Equal billing (or almost equal billing) was given to acoustic anthropology, or 'acoustemology' in Steven Feld's felicitous phrase (see Chapter 9 and the accompanying DVD). This embrace of the auditory further grounded the conference's claim to being about

sensory anthropology, since both acoustic anthropology and visual anthropology, as manifestations of 'the sensory turn', are tributaries to the field of sensory anthropology.

The other crucial component of the subtitle of this conference and book is 'critical practices'. There is a tie-in to Manchester here, as well, because Manchester could be seen as the birthplace of the anthropology and history of the senses as critical practices. I was alerted to this during a sound-walk around the campus of the university led by Rupert Cox. In the course of the walk, Rupert pointed out the Ducie Arms. Friedrich Engels was once a patron of this pub (it may even have been his favourite pub). The son of a wealthy German textile industrialist, Engels was sent by his father to Manchester in 1842 to learn the family trade. He remained there till 1844. It was during this period that he wrote the book that would later be translated into English under the title *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1844). It documented the penury, mortality, insalubrity and sensory deprivity of the life of the labourer, based on personal observation and archival research.

Engels's entrée to the underside of English society was provided by the 'fiery' Mary Burns, a nineteen-year-old Irishwoman who worked in the Engels's family factory. 'Burns introduced him to the city's working-class districts, where Engels said the filth and stench were so bad it would be "impossible for a human in any degree civilized to live in such a district"' (Gabriel 2011). Burns remained Engels's muse, and live-in lover, for the ensuing twenty years. (Engels, the 'reckless bachelor', refused the bourgeois trappings of marriage as a matter of principle.)

Engels's sensory ethnography of working-class life (the first of its kind) touched a responsive chord in the young Karl Marx.[6] The two had started corresponding in 1842 and Marx published a number of essays by Engels in the journal he edited. They finally met face to face (in Paris) in November 1844,[7] shortly after Marx published his own blistering critique of the alienation of the senses under industrial capitalism – namely, the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. If 'the *forming of the five senses* is a labor of the entire history of the world down to the present' (Marx 1987 [1844]: 109, original emphasis here and below), then 1844 marked the nadir of that trajectory. In the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, Marx describes how the senses of the worker, living amidst 'the *sewage* of civilization', are debased and deformed until he loses all notion of sensory refinement and 'no longer knows any need ... but the need to *eat*' (Marx 1987 [1844]: 117). The senses of the bourgeoisie were also affected by the scourge of capitalism, since the bourgeoisie had to forego sensory enjoyment (the dance hall, the theatre) in the interests of capital accumulation (see Marx 1987 [1844]: 118–119). If a revolt was to come, it would come from the senses.

In the work of Marx and Engels, sensory critique is the beginning of social critique. The senses are critical faculties, as well as aesthetic faculties – critical to and of the experience of class oppression and exploitation, critical of ideology (e.g. the Protestant ethic) and critical to discerning inequities in the distribution of the sensible. Marx's critique led him to conclude that the institution of private property was at the root of the widespread sensory deprivation and alienation so characteristic of industrial

capitalist society. He also envisioned a future in which 'the transcendence of private property [would entail] the complete *emancipation* of all human senses and qualities' (Marx 1987 [1844]: 139). According to Marx, only through the negation of the dehumanising regime of capitalist property relations could humankind's 'species being' come into its own:

> Only through the objectively unfolded richness of man's essential being is the richness of subjective *human* sensibility (a musical ear, an eye for beauty of form – in short *senses* capable of human gratifications, senses confirming themselves as essential powers of *man*) either cultivated or brought into being. (Marx 1987 [1844]: 108)

Fast forward to 2007 and the screening of a series of advance clips from Cathy Greenhalgh's film in progress *Cottonopolis* at the 'Beyond Text?' conference. 'Cottonopolis' was a nickname for Manchester back in the industrial era. That era is now gone, but Greenhalgh revives it with the aid of archival photographs and through interviews with former textile workers. They remember the sensory conditions of work in the mills. The film also takes us to Ahmedbab in north-west India, known as 'Manchester of the East', where the Manchester factory system was copied and where the gruelling conditions described by Engels and Marx remain. The viewer comes to see how: 'Every organ of sense is injured in an equal degree by artificial elevation of temperature, by the dust-laden atmosphere, by the deafening noise' (Marx 1954 [1867]: 401–402).

By 'following the cotton' (the film also takes us to Lodz, 'Manchester of Poland'), Greenhalgh aims to trouble the viewer's perception of this ubiquitous commodity, exposing how cotton has embroiled the lives of people from around the world in its production. At the same time, through the interviews, she seeks to bring out the 'subjective *human* sensibility' of the textile workers, past and present. One of the more poignant moments in *Cottonopolis* comes when Shamji Vishram, Kutch master weaver, compares the 'song' of the factory power-loom with that of the Jacquard handlooms used by the villagers of Gujarat, and the viewer is treated to a glimpse of the rich colours and wondrous patterns of the cloth produced on the handlooms. The textiles produced on the power-loom pale by comparison, echoing the monotony of its 'song'. Significantly, Greenhalgh's film takes not only its subject matter but also its form from the material of cotton. Where an earlier generation of anthropologists would have been drawn to the 'text' in textile, Greenhalgh is more interested to explore the 'texture' of cotton fabrics, and seeks to emulate this texture through her film style.

Experiments in seeing

Many of the films screened at 'Beyond Text?' involved experiments in seeing of extraordinary power. Two in particular stood out for me: *Black Sun* and *Christmas with Wawa*. In *Black Sun*, composer-turned-director Gary Tarn takes the viewer inside the mind's eye of painter and film-maker Hugues de Montalembert, whose world went

black following a random mugging in New York. (His eyes were sprayed with paint thinner by one of his assailants.) In the voice-over to the film, de Montalembert relates his descent into darkness in the hours immediately after the attack, and then recounts the long, arduous process of rehabilitating his senses that followed. He describes how he learned 'to process sound and texture into a very basic form of sonar'; how 'his brain began to compensate for the lack of cortical input by fashioning vivid and at times intensely erotic images in his mind's eye that he could neither understand nor control'; and how he taught himself 'to write clearly and legibly sometimes continuing past the point of running out of ink' (Pedley 2009). In a supreme act of defiance, within eighteen months of the attack, he went on a solo journey to Bali and other parts of the East. This remarkable journey of discovery, both inner and outer, was partly a quest for a lost lover and partly to feed his newly attuned senses with the sensations they craved (see de Montalembert 2011).

Tarn does a truly stunning job evoking the sensory world de Montalembert creates for himself (and for the viewer) through the use of grimy yellow filters, computer graphics and continuously shifting camera angles. It is a world both nightmarish and profoundly serene, thanks to the subtle tonal shifts of the score – a 'hauntingly abstract' score that, like the visuals, fades in and out repeatedly (Pedley 2009). It bears underlining that the images and sounds of the film intersect with de Montalembert's narrative, but do not illustrate it. The emphasis is on the interplay of these modalities, which leaves it up to the viewer to forge some kind of sense out of them. *Black Sun* is a testimony to the art of seeing without light. It is what Classen (1998: ch. 6) would call a 'lesson in aesthetics from the blind'.

Christmas with Wawa, by Jennifer Deger (see Chapter 17), is, on its surface, the homiest of home videos. It is about decorating for Christmas in the Yolngu community of Gapuwiyak, East Arnhem Land, with Mariah Carey's 'All I Want For Christmas Is You' and 'Christmas Without You' by Kenny Rogers and Dolly Parton blaring in the background. But it is coincidentally about decorating the grave and commemorating the life of the film-maker/ethnographer's adoptive aboriginal 'brother' (*wawa*), Bangana Wunungmurra, who had died six years previously. This both subverts and radically expands the Christmas theme: the 'joy' of Christmas is preceded by the cultivation of deep sorrow by 'worrying' over Bangana's photograph, stroking it, recalling his presence (making the event into an emotional rollercoaster) and the decorations, while glitzy in the extreme, are also packed with cosmic meaning (flashing Christmas lights = shooting stars = totemic signifier = ancestral power).

Christmas with Wawa is an exercise in 'participant imagining' which beautifully exemplifies Laplantine's notion of ethnography as rooted in the 'sharing of the sensible'. Rather than document Yolngu aesthetics (as in observational cinema), and rather than invite Yolngu to make their own video (in conformity with the 'black hands on camera' edict that had guided her previous work), Deger is 'taking up video with a "Yolngu eye"' (this volume: p. 167). The video is made 'with Yolngu aesthetics': it is sensitive to 'the work of viewing' as Yolngu understand this process (the viewer must 'complete'

the image and there is a refusal to verbalise meaning, etc.); post-production techniques are used to 'enliven' images (mimetic the video is not); and the politics of image production and circulation (e.g. respecting local image rights) are always uppermost in Deger's mind, even as the video is made for non-Yolngu eyes as well. *Christmas with Wawa* is an eye-opening example of 'intercultural image work' which at the same time responsibilises vision, for the most basic point Deger asks us to retain from this experiment in seeing is that 'the kinds of creative freedom and experimentation that digital technology enables should not release researchers [or audiences] from the responsibility of critically considering the power relations enacted through the camera and other acts of viewing' (this volume: p. 168).

The misperception of the environment

When I boarded the plane from Montreal to Manchester, one of the questions I had at the back of my mind was whether Tim Ingold would be at the conference and, if so, what effect his critique of the anthropology of the senses in *The Perception of the Environment* (2000) would have on the gathering.[8] As those familiar with the chapter entitled 'Stop, Look and Listen!' will recall, Ingold dismisses the work of Edmund Carpenter and Paul Stoller, Steven Feld, Alfred Gell and Constance Classen – all major contributors to the field of sensory anthropology. Why? Because what they had to say about the life of the senses in cultural context failed to conform to the dictates of the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty regarding the 'phenomenology of perception' and the psychologist J. J. Gibson regarding the senses as 'perceptual systems'. Ingold had also just published a piece called 'Against Soundscape', in which he argued that the notion of 'soundscape' – coined by the maverick Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer, and the inspiration behind many fine works of sensori-social analysis (e.g. Hirschkind 2009; Thompson 2004) – 'would be better abandoned' (Ingold 2007a). If Ingold's critiques had any merit, the 'Beyond Text?' conference should never have happened. It therefore behoves us to examine his contrarian position.

Briefly, Ingold's account of seeing is about the *function* of sight as a psychophysical process. It is not about seeing as concrete practice – that is, about *ways of seeing* in all their multiplicity: the look, the glance, the stare, the gaze, the dream; not to mention eyeing, peeking, ogling, glaring, squinting; or – to extend this taxonomy across cultures – the practice of *darsan* (auspicious sight) in India (Eck 1998), 'Rasta Far-Eye' in Jamaica (Homiak 1987) and the like. The idea of style is foreign to Ingold, though he does have a lot to say about 'skill'. Nor does Ingold's account of the function of sight pay attention to the extension/modulation of seeing via different technologies *of registration (painting, photography, cinematography, miscroscopy, ultrasound,* the use of hallucinogens, etc.). The idea of mediation is also foreign to Ingold, hence his dismissal of the whole field of visual cultural studies (see Ingold 2011: 316). Significantly, Ingold has nothing to say about colour (compare Classen 1993: 131–134;

Taussig 2009) though he has written extensively about line (Ingold 2007b). This reflects the arch-formalism and tendency towards abstraction of his approach. There is some question as to whether lines are perceived at all in some cultures, such as the Trobriands (Lee 1959), but Ingold ignores this issue.

For Ingold, seeing involves 'an experience of light' *tout court*, just as hearing is 'an experience of sound.' De Montalembert's account of the experience of seeing without light gives the lie to this prong of Ingold's argument. However, even if one were to accept Ingold's premise that seeing is conditional on light, the fact is that the experience of light (and shadow and darkness, I would add) is conditioned by culture and imbued with social values. Consider the value attached to 'shimmering' light in Yolngu culture (Deger 2006) or the preeminence of *hygge* (a warm, cozy light) in Danish culture (Bille and Sørensen 2007) or the salience of shadows in Japanese culture (Tanizaki 1977) or the socially transformative role of electric light in Western culture (Schivelbusch 1989). None of these instantiations of the materiality of light and vision in different traditions matters to Ingold (materiality being another of his bugbears). Why? Because he insists, following Merleau-Ponty, on the 'prereflective unity' of the senses and, following Gibson, on their 'interchangeability'. According to Ingold, vision, understood as 'a mode of active, exploratory engagement with the environment ... has much more in common with audition than is often supposed, and for that matter also with gustation and olfaction' (Ingold 2011: 314; see also Ingold 2000: ch. 14). Only in the most abstract (and uninteresting) sense is this proposition true. Of course, all the senses are 'active, exploratory [modes of] engagement with the environment'. This goes without saying. The real question is *how*. Reflecting on the how of perception reveals the deepset problems with Ingold's insistence on the unity and interchangeability of the senses. Seeing an apple, for example, is a very different experience from tasting an apple: in seeing, the objecthood of the apple is preserved, whereas in tasting an apple, subject and object become one; it is possible to feel, but not see, an apple in the dark, and so on. What is more, while the senses often work in concert, they may also conflict, as in the case of a stick in water which looks crooked to the eye but feels straight to the touch.

What a properly sensory anthropology calls for is more reflexivity, not less; more attention to relations of 'intersensoriality', not (some putative) unity or interchangeability; and, above all, more awareness of the indissociability of the social and the sensible, not just 'the environment'. Ingold naturalises the perception of the environment, whereas the trick is to historicise it. As Max Horkheimer observed:

> It is not only in clothing and appearance, in outward form and emotional make-up that men are the product of history. Even the way they see and hear is inseparable from the social life-process.... The facts which our senses present to us are socially preformed in two ways: through the historical character of the object perceived and through the historical character of the perceiving organ. (Horkheimer quoted in Levin 1993: 63 n. 1)

The reason for Ingold's obliviousness to what Michael Taussig (1993) calls the 'particular history' of the senses – in a dig at Diane Ackerman's (1990) 'natural history

of the senses' – is simple. Following in the footsteps of his father, the great mycologist Cecil Terence Ingold, he trained as a natural scientist before turning to the social sciences, but remains a natural scientist at heart. As a result, Ingold's understanding of the social is about as thick, or rather thin, as Margaret Thatcher's (who trained as a chemist before becoming a politician). During her tenure as Prime Minister, Thatcher famously proclaimed 'there is no such thing as society' and went about dismantling the British welfare state to prove it.[9] Ingold has waged an equally relentless attack on 'culture'. However, without some knowledge of the cultural modelling of the senses, and how such models mediate social relations and the perception of the environment, many social facts remain inexplicable. Two examples will help illustrate this point.

First, consider the question: Why are there so many Old Masters in the history of Western art (Titian, Rembrandt, etc.) but no Old Mistresses? To answer this question it is necessary to inquire into how the division and hierarchisation of the senses intersects with and compounds the division and hierarchisation of the sexes. The traditional Western association of the male sex with the 'higher', distance senses of sight and hearing supported the notion that men are naturally fitted for such activities as exploring, ruling, writing and painting, while the association of the female sex with the 'lower', proximity senses of smell, taste and touch relegated them to the home, and made them mistresses of the kitchen, the nursery and the bedroom. Such was the power of this categorisation that those women who challenged the sensory division of labour (e.g. by writing or painting instead of cooking and sewing) faced considerable social opprobrium until well into the twentieth century (Classen 1998: ch. 3). In keeping with their station, women could engage in handicrafts, and did (Classen 2005: ch. 20), but were barred from the so-called fine or 'visual' arts.

Second, take the question: Why, during the pilgrimage to the sanctuary of the Lord of the Shiny Snow in the Peruvian Andes, do pilgrims bearing flags and holy images always lead the procession and musicians playing flutes and drums bring up the rear? In her sensory ethnography of this ritual trek, which attracts 40,000–50,000 Andeans annually, Zoila Mendoza emphasises the necessity of interpreting it in light of the Andean 'sensory model'. This model is predicated on the unity of 'hearing, sight and bodily movement (kinesthesia)'. Pilgrims want to 'learn/know through sight [*rikuy* in Quechua], while walking with the appropriate accompanying music' (Mendoza 2015: 143). The rhythm of the music helps them move in a coordinated way, each troupe 'a solid mass' (which is very important), and to concentrate on the landscape, with its many sacred spaces, which the pilgrims desire to 'see/know' (*rikuy*). Mendoza relates how one year, when the pilgrims go part of the way by truck (instead of walking), the experience was said to be less 'fun' (vibrant, vital), less memorable, and did not permit them to expiate their sins (which can be done only by walking), hence was less morally uplifting.

The positioning of the visual and auditory components of the procession is consistent with Andean sensory cosmology, the lineaments of which can be traced

back to Inca times: 'Sight is associated with the visible, structured past, situated in front of the body; and hearing with the dark, fluid future, situated behind the body' (Classen quoted in Mendoza 2015: 145). Solomon elaborates on this identification of forward space with past time (and hence the affirmation of tradition):

> to move forward in space means to continue to be in force, to be alive, vibrant. The Quechua spatial metaphor, while superficially similar to the English idea that 'to move forward' is to 'promote' (transitive) or to 'progress' (intransitive), is actually very different, invoking at the same time a model from the past that must be followed. (Solomon in Mendoza 2015: 145)

To conceive of the past as lying ahead and the future as positioned behind goes completely counter to Euro-American constructions of space-time, and thus exposes the cultural contingency of all such associations. Phenomenologists like Ingold would be at a particular disadvantage trying to comprehend the Andean repartition of space-time and the senses, due to their insistence on the 'prereflective unity' of the senses. This insistence effectively bars them from critically examining any of the sensory biases and preconceptions instilled in them by their own culture. This is why sensory anthropology necessarily parts ways with phenomenology. 'I *am*, at once, my tasting, my listening, and the rest', Ingold (2011: 325) proclaims, generalising on the basis of his own ontogeny, legislating for all humanity, obliterating alterity.[10]

Mixing the senses

Unlike those whose entrée to sensory ethnography has been through video recording, such as Sarah Pink (2009), or sound recording, such as Steven Feld (this volume), my introduction was through the sense of smell (Howes 1987, 2003). Other entrées to the field include dance, museum objects and food, to name but a few. For example, Tomie Hahn leads us into the sensory world of Japanese dance in *Sensational Knowledge* (2007); Sandra Dudley invites us to focus on 'experiencing the properties of things' in *Museum Objects* (2012); and David Sutton serves up a comprehensive overview of the anthropology of taste and tasting (or 'gustemology') in 'Food and the Senses' (2010). It would be interesting to explore how each of these authors' theory and methodology are influenced by their choice of modality.

Smell is typically screened out of ethnographic films. Every film must have a soundtrack, but no thought is given to providing a smelltrack. In some cases this is fortunate; for example, in the case of films having to do with sheep. But the absence of smell can lead to the misperception of the environment if one is not careful to compensate intellectually. There are cultures which attach considerable significance to the wind and breath, such as the Ongee of the Andaman Islands. Smell is not dispensable for the Ongee: it is the very essence of life and identity. It is also the means by which the Ongee navigate their environment and tell which month it is: their

calendar is 'a calendar of scents', as Radcliffe-Brown (for all his obtuseness to most questions of aesthetics) once observed (Classen *et al.*, 1994: 114, 143–145).

I took a *kōdō* kit with me to Manchester because I wanted to make a point about how olfaction can serve as a vehicle for the imagination no less than film.[11] *Kōdō*, sometimes referred to as the 'Japanese incense-guessing game', is actually a highly ritualised practice that is comparable to the Japanese tea ceremony in terms of its intricacy. Like the tea ceremony, it has its own paraphernalia: censer, metal tongs and chopsticks, charcoal, white ash, ash press, mica plate, etc. The aromatic woods – which are extremely expensive and graded by taste, interestingly – are not burnt, only heated atop the mica plate so as to release their aroma. The ceremony involves the host introducing the guests to the selection of incenses he or she has chosen for the match, by circulating them, one at a time, in the censer, then mixing up the order, and circulating the censer again. The guests write their responses using a calligraphy set.

There is a way of smelling. It is called 'listen to the incense' (*ko wo kiku*). It involves clasping the censer in one hand, cupping the smoke with the other, inclining one's head while bringing the censer up to one's nose, breathing in, and then turning one's head to one side (so as to continue breathing without disturbing the ash in the burner) as one concentrates on trying to identify the aroma. This action is repeated three times. The concentration involved is more like listening than hearing, whence the expression 'listen to the incense'. This expression, like the custom, is not simply metaphorical, however. There is an underlying trace of synaesthesia, which comes from the sensory cosmology of Buddhism (one of Japan's national religions): in Buddha's world, everything is fragrant, like incense, including the Buddha's words or teachings, which are therefore to be scented as well as heard.

There are different versions of *kōdō*. In some, it is simply a matter of discriminating and naming the scents correctly. In another, the scents are keyed to different passages in *The Tale of Genji*, a classic of Japanese literature. Most versions have to do with travel. Each incense is associated with a different place, and to smell the incense (correctly) is to be imaginatively transported to that place. In Japan, scents take you places, unlike in the West, where they simply trigger memories (the so-called Proust effect). Smell operates outwardly instead of inwardly (see further McHugh 2012). In any event, the important thing to retain from this is that fragrances can serve as an alternative medium to photographs as regards imagining distant places.

Kōdō is an example of a technology of perception which extends the nose in the same way the audio tape-recorder is an extension of the ear, or the viewfinder on a camcorder is an extension of the eye. Each technology opens up some aspects of the sensory world to our attention while occluding others. 'The medium is the massage', as McLuhan would say. Significantly, the book you are reading comes with a DVD. It is well worth a look-hear for the extra dimensions it brings. But imagine if this book also came with an assortment of objects that you could manipulate, sniff and chew on.[12]

Every culture embodies a different mix of the senses in its subjects. The task of the anthropologist is to learn how the senses and sensations are distinguished,

valued and combined on a cosmological, social and individual level. How, then, to communicate this knowledge? The consolidation of visual anthropology and the recent rapprochement between art and anthropology (Schneider and Wright 2006) have opened up many exciting new *sensory* avenues for the production and communication of such knowledge, without completely supplanting text, which continues to have its uses. The trick, as always, is to work out the best mix.

Notes

1 One wonders whether Rivers' subjects would ever have consented to participate in these psychophysical experiments had he explained more of the reasoning behind the tests. Rivers subscribed to Herbert Spencer's theory of mental evolution. Spencer held that '"primitives" surpassed "civilised" people in psychophysical performance because more energy remained devoted to this level in the former instead of being diverted to "higher functions"' (Richards 1998: 137; see Rivers 1901: 137). It will be appreciated that, given the supposed connection between sensory superiority and mental inferiority, to score well on the tests could only reflect badly on a subject's 'intellectual development' (see further Howes 2012). The whole exercise was rigged from the start.

2 Some of those in the vanguard of the textual revolution would later come to regret the overwhelming focus on the poetic to the neglect of the aesthetic in *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986), as we learned from George Marcus at the conference. Marcus himself has come round to the senses, as it were. Incidentally, 'aesthetic' stems from the Greek *aisthēsis*, meaning sense perception. It does not simply refer to the beautiful, or to vision, for that matter, but to all the senses.

3 *Doon School Chronicles* came out after Judith and David MacDougall parted ways, and after Grimshaw completed writing *The Ethnographer's Eye*, so Grimshaw was not in a position to observe the birth of what is here called 'sensational cinema'.

4 Manifesting a similarly high degree of cross-modal reflexivity, the editors of the present volume write in their Introduction: 'The sensory faculties of looking, listening and feeling that are activated by these media [photography, film, sound recordings etc.] … [and which] sometimes flow separately and at other times mix and merge … are important, necessary and alternative means of anthropological knowledge' both relative to each other and relative to the kind of analysis and knowledge that texts facilitate (this volume: 11). By contrast, Tim Ingold views all these different modalities as interchangeable, on which more below.

5 My use of the term 'sensing' builds on the multiple meanings of the word 'sense'. 'Sense' includes both sensation *and* signification, feeling *and* meaning in its spectrum of referents. For those such as Lucien Castaing-Taylor (1996) who regret the way 'meaning' tends to get 'linguified' in much contemporary scholarship, the term 'sensing' could provide a suitable alternative.

6 Marx's denunciation of the alienation of the senses under industrial capitalism also took a page from the utopianist Charles Fourier's critique of the 'sensory ills' of civilisation. Fourier, however, went considerably further than Marx in imagining an alternative sensory regime (see Classen 1998: ch. 2). It bears noting that capitalism has changed its tune since the time Marx was writing: in place of disciplining the senses with a view to increasing production, the focus now is on seducing the senses in the interests of 'leveraging' consumption (see Howes 2003: ch. 8; Lindstrom 2005).

7 It would obviously strengthen my case for Manchester being the birthplace of sensory ethnography and history had Marx and Engels first met at the Ducie Arms, rather than where they actually met (the Café de la Régence in Paris). History often gets in the way of a good story. Regardless, Engels's influence can be seen in all of Marx's subsequent works, beginning with *The Theses on Feuerbach*, written in 1845, where Marx broke with the philosophical materialism of Feuerbach and came to espouse a more historical materialism. Incidentally, I went back to the Ducie Arms after dinner that night to pay my respects to Engels's ghost. The pub was closed by the time I got there. Not being one to carry a camera, and not even having a notebook in hand, I nevertheless wanted to register the occasion. So I licked the building. For the record, it tasted chalky.

8 As it turned out, Ingold was in attendance at the conference, though he did not speak. We met at a reception and had the first of a series of highly stimulating conversations.

9 The idea of social organisation is muted in Ingold's work. The social, if it is acknowledged at all, is

dissolved into 'a field of relations' and we are admonished to recognise that 'relations among humans, which we are accustomed to calling "social", are but a subset of ecological relations' (Ingold 2000: 5). In place of society, Ingold privileges ontogeny: his work starts 'from the premise that every living being is a particular nexus of growth and development within a field of relations. Skills of perception and action, I argue, emerge within these processes of ontogenetic development' (Ingold 2011: 314). Ingold's idea of 'the environment' is equally truncated. As discussed elsewhere, his environment is 'one in which you can look, listen, and are always on the move, but not taste or smell' (Howes 2005a: 29).

10 This said, I must confess my admiration for the high degree of sensationalism in Ingold's Huxley lecture, 'Culture on the Ground: The World Perceived Through the Feet' (2004). This is probably because some of the anthropology of the senses has rubbed off on Ingold, just as his critiques have rubbed off on my work.

11 For a further discussion of *kōdō* see Howes (2010).

12 Another strategy for engaging the senses of the addressee is to construct an 'immersive sensory environment' like *Displace v. 1.0*, the installation that Chris Salter and his associates put on in the Concordia Black Box at the 2011 meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Montreal (see Labruto 2012; Salter 2015). *Displace v. 1.0* was more than a *son et lumière*, much more, with its mix of flavours (in the form of beverages and jelly patties), odour-impregnated walls, blasts of heat, revolving platform, sheets of coloured light, fog, and electrifying soundtrack synthesised from the melodies of various Amerindian flutes and percussive instruments. Modelled loosely on the sensory cosmology of an Amazonian society, this installation sought to integrate all the senses, and transpose them in a way that resonated with the 'fugue of the five senses' as described by Lévi-Strauss in the first volume of *Mythologiques* (1969). Its purpose was to attune experiencers (who went through the maze in groups of six, each odyssey lasting forty minutes) to different ways of using and combining their senses as a prelude to fieldwork – sensorial fieldwork, as defined by Robben and Sluka:

> sensorial fieldworkers [should] make the study of the entire sensorium indispensable to other domains of ethnographic inquiry, such as economics or politics.... Just as attention to gender and reflexivity is now part and parcel of most ethnographic work, so the entire range of senses should be of similar concern. (Robben and Sluka 2007: 388)

19 · After cultural theory: the power of images, the lure of immediacy[1]

Janet Wolff

> Every object sees us: there are eyes growing on everything. (Elkins 1996: 51)

> What pictures want, then, is not to be interpreted, decoded, worshipped, smashed, exposed, or demystified by their beholders.... What pictures want in the last instance ... is simply to be asked what they want. (Mitchell 2005: 48)

> The object of art also possesses a subjecthood, in the sense of an agency distinct from the artist who made it – an agency that compels viewers to respond in certain ways. (Holly 1996: 11)

I should start by confessing that my reflections here may seem to run counter to the spirit of this volume. In the context of a series of chapters, each brilliantly and persuasively arguing the case for a move away from traditional anthropological approaches, and especially text-based forms of knowledge, I write in defence of sociology and cultural studies. As I shall suggest, though, this is by no means a refusal of the turn to visuality, to the corporeal, the sensory and the material, in anthropological and cultural studies. I share entirely the enthusiasm for the successive revisions of social science we have seen in the past two or three decades (my own particular trajectory from an original base in sociology rather than anthropology) – the transformation of positivistic sociologies of culture, the foregrounding of ideology and representation, and the rise of visual studies in the wake of its older partner, cultural studies. The exploration of both the visual dimensions of social life and the productivity of visual methods in social science, as demonstrated in the chapters collected here, has produced a revolution in understanding. And just as the move, first, from social structure to text and then from text to visuality in anthropology has opened up new kinds of knowledge, now the turn to other kinds of sensory experience takes this further, in unforeseen and fascinating ways. In that sense, this volume is an important contribution to the debate (as was the conference which gave rise to it), as well as a timely occasion for taking stock of the new methods and approaches.

My inclination towards a retrograde move comes from a concern about the evaporation of the social, and the overstatement of the liberation from language and analysis, in some versions of the new methodologies. It seems to me that across a wide range of challenges to traditional social science, certain crucial things may be lost. It could be that this is merely the anxiety of an unreconstructed humanist, for whom notions of the post-human, statements about the agency of objects, and discoveries of the neural and cognitive aspects of human behaviour are a step (or several steps) too far. Nevertheless, I think it is worth investigating this unease, and trying to make the case for a certain caution in relation to tendencies to abandon too hastily the solidities of cultural and sociological theory. One of the things I will consider in this chapter is why these challenges to traditional methods and theories have been necessary (and valuable) – that is, what the limits of cultural theory have been, and why scholars have turned to different approaches. I am talking here about developments which may seem quite disparate: the turn to 'affect'; the (re)turn to phenomenology (and post-phenomenology); actor-network theory in sociology and science studies; theories of the post-human (human/animal, human/nature, human/technology); theories of materiality; emphasis on the agency of objects; the turn to neuroscience in the humanities and social sciences; the insistence on 'presence' as an unmediated encounter (for example, with the work of art – see Gumbrecht 2004); and the foregrounding of the embodied nature of any act (even the most 'intellectual' practices, such as reading – see Littau 2006). This is indeed an eclectic list. But one finds constant overlaps and meeting points – for example, in a conference at the University of Manchester in February 2009, organised by the Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change (a body funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, ESRC) on 'Materialising the Subject: Phenomenological and Post-ANT Objects in the Social Sciences' (in addition to the three themes already contained in the title, there was discussion at the conference too about cognitive science, neuroscience and affect). And Nigel Thrift, in an exploration of affect in urban space, has occasion to discuss cognitive science, the idea of the 'transhuman', embodied knowledge and biopolitics (Thrift 2004; see also Thrift 2008). Whether combined or separate, though, what these developments have in common, and what they achieve collectively, is a more or less drastic threefold displacement: of the separateness (and primacy) of the human in relation to nature; of the primacy of the rational and the intellectual in human (and social) action; and of the primacy of analytic methods in the social and human sciences. All this is now in question, in multiple ways. At stake is the status of critical theories of culture – sociological, hermeneutic, semiotic, interpretative – which are in some cases explicitly rejected. Although I will not be able to consider each theoretical development here, I want to focus on some key issues as a way of pinning down what I see as the dangers of this trend.

I approach this from the discipline of art history (my own more recent disciplinary home). My original involvement in the 'Beyond Text?' conference in 2007 was as a respondent/contributor to a panel on 'The Power of Images'. I was pleased to be

invited to participate, because this provided the opportunity to give some thought to an issue which had begun to preoccupy me – the rise of a new kind of animism. The quotations which open this chapter illustrate what I mean. They are examples of a growing tendency to argue that pictures 'speak to' viewers, that they have their own 'power'. David Freedberg was one of the first to make this case (Freedberg 1989). His book, *The Power of Images*, argues that the power images (and objects) are seen to have in 'primitive' societies should be acknowledged too in contemporary Western society:

> I have striven to counter the still widely current view (whether explicit or implicit) that certain characteristics both of art and of responses to it are solely confined to 'primitive' or non-Western societies. Much of what follows deals with the sorts of behaviour in the West that rational positivists like to describe as irrational, superstitious, or primitive, explicable only in terms of 'magic'. I would, in fact, be happy if the long-standing distinction between objects that elicit particular responses because of imputed 'religious' or 'magical' powers and those that are supposed to have purely 'aesthetic' functions could be collapsed. I do not believe that the distinction is a viable one. Indeed, it seems to me that we should now be prepared to remove the evidence of phenomena like the animism of images from discussions of 'magic', and that we should confront more squarely the extent to which such phenomena tell us about the use and function of images themselves and of responses to them. (Freedberg 1989: xxi–xxii)

Through discussion of a wide range of artworks, objects and practices (including the votive image, waxworks, censorship and iconoclasm), Freedberg demonstrates the persistence in the modern world of a 'power' in images, as active as it is in animistic cultures. In general, he suggests, the normal emotional and psychological engagement with images is repressed and denied in our culture and his book is, among other things, a plea for the recognition, and reinstatement of the legitimacy, of emotional (and sexual) responses to art. But what is this 'power', and how do images come to manifest it? The suggestion of continuities between a West African tribal ceremony, associating ancestral spirits with a ritual mask (one of his examples – Freedberg 1989: 31) and practices of iconoclasm and censorship in our own recent history, which are obviously premised on a fear of the power images may have, is illuminating, and there is no problem in acknowledging two things: that our relationship to images (as to other objects) is often an emotional, affective one; and that even in advanced societies we retain an idea that in some circumstances images (and other objects) are powerful, and hence may need to be hidden. But this is not at all the same thing as believing that somehow power inheres *in* the image/object. We can recognise the power of the image, while understanding full well that that power is (socially, culturally, perhaps politically) *given* to it. Freedberg himself is more interested in the crucial project of challenging the Western insistence on purely detached and intellectual exchanges with images than in considering the sources of the image's power. It is worth noting, though, that occasional references to, for example, 'certain aspects of behaviour and response that may usefully be seen to be universally and transculturally markable' suggest other reasons for a belief in features of the aesthetic that transcend the social and contingent,

a belief borne out in his more recent work on neuroscience and art (Freedberg 1989: 24; see also Freedberg 2005; Freedberg and Gallese 2007).

Freedberg is not alone among art historians in wishing to restore power to images. Michael Ann Holly has argued that works of art determine their own subsequent histories, and prefigure the interpretations of later viewers and critics:

> To acknowledge the hold that the past itself exerts on us, we need to focus on the way historical works of art position us as their ideal spectators, expect certain responses from us, and confirm in the exchange what they anticipated all along. (Holly 1996: 9)

Rejecting the distinction between subject (viewer, art historian) and object (painting), she explores through a series of case studies of early modern European artists the 'subjecthood' of paintings themselves. Importantly, she notes from the outset that her project is theory-driven – that it is made possible by post-structuralist critiques of the subject–object relationship. For her, then, the power of images has nothing to do with ineffable or mystical presence; rather, it is always fully embedded in systems of representation, and its intersection with later viewers is always a matter of interpretation. As she puts it, 'I argue by way of specific historical examples that representational practices encoded in works of art continue to be encoded in their commentaries' (Holly 1996: xiii). Her interest is in what she calls 'the afterlife of the object' (14) and the ways in which the object 'continues to work at organizing its remembrance in the cultural histories that employ it' (15). Discussing Robert Campin's fifteenth-century *Annunciation* (known as the Merode Altarpiece), she challenges Panofsky's 1953 iconological account, which interprets its 'meaning' through the symbols in the image (white lilies, pane of glass, extinguished candle). Typical of a mid-twentieth-century analytic approach, this account reads the work of art as a document, of the artist and of his period. It is closed to any idea of the image playing a role in its own interpretation. Holly's argument is that Panofsky's method is itself the product of the 'pictorial strategies' (Holly 1996: 156) of the painting. 'It is this to-and-fro-ness, the element of play between image and text, in which I am interested. As an amateur detective myself, I am employing this fifteenth-century image to uncover the disguised agenda in Panofsky's twentieth-century text' (157). The historiographic and conceptual intention here is very different from Freedberg's insistence on the power of images, but both participate in the wider project of challenging an idea of the pure (inert, passive) objecthood of images, instead according them a certain agency.

Examples of this trend proliferate. W. J. T. Mitchell, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, famously asked 'what do pictures want?' (Mitchell 2005). Aiming (like Holly), as he says, to 'undermine the ready-made template for interpretative mastery', he wants instead 'to put our relation to the work into question, to make the *relationality* of image and beholder the field of investigation' (Mitchell 2005: 49). By this he means (perhaps among other things) that the *visuality* of the image must be acknowledged and that images should not simply be 'turned into language' (47). Here the rhetorical effect is misleading – it quickly becomes clear that what at first sounds animistic (pictures

with desires) is not that at all. Pictures have to be taken seriously, taken on their own terms; more accurately, I suppose, Mitchell is asking 'what do pictures *need*?' (or 'how do we need to think about pictures?'). Similarly with James Elkins' provocative title *The Object Stares Back*. What could this possibly mean? The quotation I began with suggests a literal reading of this – objects actually looking (back) at us. Or this: 'And objects do have eyes. The knife sees me: it gleams from the tabletop and says, "Pick me up." As in *Alice in Wonderland*, food seems to speak. A cookie looks at me with its single eye and whispers "Eat me." And ultimately, objects all say one thing: "Look at me"' (Elkins 1996: 72). But as with Mitchell, the arresting rhetoric is merely that – Elkins is no more arguing for reinstating animism than Mitchell or Holly. The suggestion that 'the object returns the look' (70) is a way of saying that our seeing is always motivated by desire: that our (visual) engagement with the material world is always invested with meaning – meaning produced by us, but 'discovered' in objects and paintings. The 'speaking' and the 'seeing/staring back' are the effect of an affective relationship with the object in question. (They also describe well the phenomenological *experience* of the visual encounter, in which the object *appears* to address us.)

So, again, the power of images, in these varied but related accounts by art historians, is a power which is socially and culturally (and psychologically) given to them. The language of animism, mobilised to confrontational effect, to jolt us into abandoning our bad positivistic habits, is a metaphorical language. As Mitchell points out, the idea of pictures as animated is really a 'constitutive fiction', employed to urge us to take them seriously (Mitchell 2005: 46). Moreover, for these authors the insistence on the autonomy of the image, and on the complexities of our engagement with images, is not an argument to abandon theories of representation, or indeed social-cultural theory more generally. Michael Holly's argument, as pointed out earlier, is firmly grounded in post-structuralist theory. Mitchell (2005: 46) is clear that 'what pictures want certainly does not eliminate the interpretation of signs'. For others, though, a more unequivocal turn to immediacy (that is, a view of experience unmediated by culture or language) is in play. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's insistence on the *presence* which characterises encounters with cultural objects (his own field is literary studies) privileges a kind of experience which escapes interpretation and analysis altogether:

> This book seeks to make a pledge against the tendency in contemporary culture to abandon and even forget the possibility of a presence-based relationship to the world. More specifically: to make a pledge against the systematic bracketing of presence, and against the uncontested centrality of interpretation, in the academic disciplines that we call 'the humanities and the arts'. (Gumbrecht 2004: xiv–xv)

For him, attributing meaning to a thing means that 'we seem to attenuate, inevitably, the impact that this thing can have on our bodies and our senses' (xiv). This impact – what he calls 'presence' – is non-hermeneutic and unmediated. It is based on a Heideggerian notion of Being which, according to Gumbrecht, 'refers to the things of the world before they become part of a culture' (70). More in accordance with

a medieval than a modern worldview (79), in 'presence cultures' 'the things of the world, on top of their material being, have an inherent meaning (not just a meaning conveyed to them through interpretation)' (80). This anti-hermeneutic approach is intended to supplement, not to replace, the hermeneutic – Gumbrecht says that his book is not 'against interpretation' (2). His argument is that hermeneutic (and semiotic, analytic) approaches cannot do justice to aesthetic experience. Aesthetics and cultural theory therefore need to retain the tension between presence and meaning (110). Nevertheless, the concept of 'presence' introduces something more radical here, going beyond the new hermeneutics of Mitchell, Elkins and Holly. It provides the theoretical (ontological) support for those who, like Susan Sontag in an influential essay pre-dating this debate by more than thirty years, believe that 'interpretation ... violates art' (Sontag 1969: 19). Crucially, from the point of view of my interests here, it foregrounds an experience which escapes language, discourse and interpretation. The 'power' of images (literary texts, other cultural objects) is beyond the reach of analytic strategies; its terms of comprehension are epiphany, presentification, deixis (Gumbrecht 2004: 95).

We find a similar urge to subvert decades of critical theory (not to mention more than two centuries of Enlightenment thought) in the recent work of historian Frank Ankersmit, which also counterposes experience to theory and the text, seeking to 'restore to thinking about history and history writing something of the warmth of the human heart and of what has a resonance in the depths of our souls' (Ankersmit 2005: 11). He sees language as the 'mortal enemy' of experience, as a shield preventing contact with the world, and aims to rehabilitate experience as a central category of historical consciousness. Here the ontological (Heideggerian) element is absent, and one could envisage the historian incorporating the experiential into 'normal' historical methods, as, for example, oral historians have always done. But the hostility to language suggests again the possibility of a certain unmediated experience, to be captured by special means. And, to return to the domain of art history, invocation of the immediate is Georges Didi-Huberman's project, in the exploration of moments of fracture in paintings, and the privileging of the phenomenological in relation to the semiotic (Didi-Huberman 1989, 2005). Art history's commitment to description and analysis fails, he says, when we are confronted with the visual element which resists incorporation – for example a patch of white paint in a Brueghel painting or a burst of colour in the foreground of Vermeer's *The Lacemaker*, inexplicable in mimetic or representational terms (Didi-Huberman 1989: 141, 150–159). Such 'representational voids' (156) – unlike *details*, which may be iconographical attributes and hence part of the 'story' – have a tendency to problematise the work itself, which makes the phenomenological field as essential as the semiological field (161). He summarises the point thus: 'The patch could therefore be defined as that part of a painting which ostensibly interrupts, here or there, the continuity of the representational system of the picture' (164). Elsewhere he explores the effect of a patch of white in Fra Angelico's *Annunciation* in the Monastery of San Marco, suggesting that this incomplete, or meaningless, section of the fresco 'reaches its spectator by other paths' than the

representational – an effect he calls 'the "whack" of white' (Didi-Huberman 2005: 17). Again, it is a question of the phenomenology of the gaze, which here encounters something that presents itself 'without describing or representing' (25). It is a moment in which we move 'into the realm of an iconology that is singularly weakened: deprived of a code, delivered up to associations' (27). Didi-Huberman refers to this is as the rift between the visible and the visual (27); it is the latter which refuses integration into 'the conventional schema of mastery of the visible', belonging in the realm of the 'phenomenology of gazes and touches' (30).

The authors discussed so far move beyond critical theory to address aspects of culture which analytic approaches cannot account for – the phenomenological encounter, the resistance of 'the visual' to interpretation, the ways in which works of art seem to address us directly. As we have seen, these theories may be more or less compatible with (or supplementary to) hermeneutic methods, though often they propose an immediacy of experience which escapes language and interpretation entirely. In their collective move away from a long-standing commitment to analytic methods, based on a social-historical understanding of systems of representation, they participate in a larger trend in contemporary theory. We are seeing a variety of interventions whose effect is to displace a subject-centred humanist art history and cultural studies focused on meaning and interpretation. The kinds of 'immediacy' discovered, variously, in some power-of-images discourse, in theories of embodied experience and of affect, and in neuroaesthetics cannot be accounted for in the usual frameworks of cultural theory. Indeed, that is the point – the perceived inadequacies of cultural theory to account for aesthetic experience in particular (and human experience more generally). Theories of the 'post-human' emphasise the artificial separation of the human and the non-human (animal, nature, technology), whether because of advances in technology which render the separation increasingly difficult to sustain, or because the separation is itself seen as an error of modernist thinking (Latour 1993; Spinks 2001). Accounts of the materiality of social life, including the agency of objects and actor networks, similarly shift the focus away from a humanist social science (for example, Miller 2005; Oppenheim 2007). Work in cognitive science is employed to suggest operations of consciousness that have little to do with 'meaning' in the usual sense (Changeux 1994; Stafford 2007; Turner 2002). And theories of affect stress aspects of behaviour, including aesthetic response, usually ignored by cultural theory – affect understood either as emotion (Ahmed 2004; Bennett 2005; Thompson 2009) or (here linked to neuroscience or theories of the post-human) as 'biomediated' (Clough 2007, 2008; Sedgwick and Frank 1995; Thrift 2004). In all cases, human agency is refigured in terms that go beyond/before conscious thought (and beyond/before the unconscious too, understood in classic psychoanalytic terms). The corollary of this is that cultural theory is dealing with material that '*precedes* and *exceeds* the signifying regime of ideological systems' (Spinks 2001: 23) and that the usual strategies (social-historical, interpretative) have to be supplemented or even replaced. (In this, the new post-humanism goes much further than an earlier version,

whose achievement was to manifest the subject as decentred; the anti-humanism of post-structuralist theory did not propose the *post*-human, but retained the human subject, in all its complex psychic and ideological formation, as its referent.)

I think there are three reasons for the perceived impasse in cultural theory, which have opened the way for the appeal of new sciences and for the seductions of immediacy. Most obviously, the emotional and affective aspects of personal and social life have been entirely ignored or marginalised in critical theory, including theories of culture and aesthetics. Something absolutely central to the experiential nature of the aesthetic encounter has been quite invisible – indeed, inaccessible – to the dominant theories and methods. So the turn to phenomenology and to theories of affect has been a necessary supplement and corrective, providing ways of addressing what Mitchell calls the 'surplus value' of images (Mitchell 2005: 76). Secondly, critical theory and cultural studies have had a tendency to block the discourse(s) of aesthetics – that is, they have failed to provide languages equipped to consider questions of evaluation and taste, other than in sociological terms (for instance, exploring the culture of taste-makers, arts institutions, critics etc. or studying audience/viewer/reader reception). Hence the turn to aesthetics and to debates about beauty in the past few years, and the sense that theories of affect (or, for some, work in neuroscience) may be of assistance here. Finally, I would say that a misunderstanding of the normal operation of conceptual models has led some to embrace the notion that certain events, experiences, encounters somehow 'escape' language and meaning. That is, the sense that there is a 'residue', haunting the text or the discursive account, can seduce us into identifying a more mysterious, barely graspable element, in art or in other kinds of encounter. Very often, though, this is a mirage, the perception of something else entirely. The point is that any interpretative model or conceptual scheme, designed or adopted to illuminate certain features of the social or cultural scene, at the same time obscures others, leaving them invisible. So other meanings hover at the edges, sensed but not articulated, suggesting a certain ineffable presence. In fact, they may be perfectly graspable within the framework of a different conceptual scheme. It is in the nature of such schemes that they make visible some things and are blind to others. The non-discursive may simply be the not-yet-discursive, which new critical machineries may bring forward, just as feminist theory has illuminated what was hidden from the social and analytic gaze, or psychoanalytic criticism allowed new and subtle interpretations of the aesthetic encounter. (A current example is the coming into visibility of older women; see Wolff 2010.)

The question is to what extent we have to give up on cultural studies – by which, again, I mean social-historical, critical, interpretative approaches to culture. It seems to me that a great deal of the new work under discussion here fits perfectly well into modified versions of the field. Not only that – I would argue that candidates for unmediated experience are rarely that. The affective (which we certainly need to be able to consider) is unlikely *not* to be mediated by biographical and cultural factors. Arguments for hard-wiring and for human universals, which would pre-empt such

questions, have, to date, been either unconvincing or not particularly enlightening. For example, the turn to neuroscience in art history and aesthetics seems to me to have had minimal pay-off, and even then it fails to persuade that the brain somehow eludes interpretative and experiential factors. Susan Leigh Foster, like others in the field of dance studies, has suggested that we can understand audiences' response to watching dance in terms of the empathy engendered by the firing of mirror neurons (Foster 2008; see also the Watching Dance Project 2008). This kinaesthetic empathy, detected in those watching the bodily movement of others, is grounded in processes discovered by neuroscience:

> These neurons fire when the subject performs an action, and they also fire when the subject sees the action being performed. Thus as we watch someone moving, motor circuits in the brain are activated that do not necessarily result in visible movement, but nonetheless rehearse that movement.... The viewer, watching a dance, is literally dancing along. (Foster 2008: 54–55)

But although it is interesting to learn the physiological coordinates of felt emotions, or (though this is not necessarily what it claimed or demonstrated) of aesthetic appeal, what does this add to critical dance studies? I suppose a universalist claim about responses to perceived motion would be something we would need to take into account, but in the absence of any such evidence it seems clear that the responses (with their manifestations in brain chemistry) are no less socially or experientially grounded than we assumed. Indeed, Foster acknowledges that the behaviour of mirror neurons is not a given: 'scientists have found that viewers trained in a specific form of dance will "dance" along more intensively with that form than with a form they do not know' (55). This seems intuitively right, and probably accords with experience for many of us (dance-trained and otherwise). What it means is that the study of dance audiences is still dependent on socio-historical and interpretative methods of analysis (and Foster is certainly not arguing against this). I suspect that for other scholars, more imperialist claims are made for cognitive science (that is, that aesthetic and other experiences may be entirely explained in terms of neural events) but I have not read widely enough in the field to review such claims. I cannot really see that we are better off knowing about kinaesthetic empathy and its manifestations in the brain. The contribution here is mostly by way of supplement, in the demonstration of how a certain type of engagement can be seen in action in (for instance) a brain scan. And by the time these ideas are translated into the field of art history, the reward is even less impressive. For example, David Freedberg claims that viewing a *painting* of a dance – Rubens' *Peasant Dance* – mobilises those mirror neurons, 'explaining' the emotions that art inspires:

> As we learn more about the biological basis of empathy and emotion ... we can stop talking vaguely as we art historians habitually do of corporeal involvement with paintings and sculpture. Instead, we can speak quite precisely about the neuronal basis of the empathetic feelings in our bones, or in our veins, when we see a particularly striking movement in a picture. (Freedberg 2005; see also Freedberg and Gallese 2007)

Not only is this further removed from an account of the art object and its viewer (it is the *representation* of a dance which is at issue, where, at least for Foster, it is the dancing body itself, the actual subject of dance studies), it seems a very limited kind of art history which is reduced to looking for images of bodily states in order to find a basis for supposed neuronal responses. A book-length study by John Onians, another recent art-history convert to neuroscience, claiming an extensive list of precursors in 'neuroarthistory' (Aristotle, Montesquieu, Kant, Marx, Ruskin, Riegl, Gombrich and more), succeeds only in rendering the project both extremely vague and rather incredible (Onians 2007). (For a devastating critique of attempts to apply neuroscience to literature, demonstrating the limits of neuroscientific knowledge with regard to human experience, the ignorant and cavalier applications of its most basic ideas to the arts, and the inexplicable willingness to ignore crucial issues of context, see Tallis 2008.)

Neuroaesthestics may be at the more extreme end of anti-hermeneutic interventions, but it shares with certain theories of affect, of presence, of the agency of objects and of the materiality and sensual nature of experience a susceptibility to the lure of the immediate. This is based on the conviction that aspects of experience escape language and signification. Norman Bryson, like Freedberg and Onians a long-established art historian newly persuaded by the promise of neuroscience, is clear about this characteristic of objects we encounter: 'While each artefact may *carry* a meaning or meanings that belong to the order of cultural symbols, the artefact cannot be *derived* from these alone. It comes into being through the interaction of a welter of factors that lie beyond the symbolic register' (Bryson 2003: 4). It is this postulation of a mysterious quality, variously found by authors in the opacity of an image, the resistance of a text to assimilation into an interpretative scheme, the felt immediacy of sensual experience, or the intensity of an emotional response to an artwork, that I want to challenge. To do this, I shall start by itemising, and endorsing, a number of transformations of traditional, text-based, interpretative-critical theory:

(1) The visual (and other sensory) aspects of social life must be acknowledged and accounted for in cultural studies/anthropology/sociology, as must the fundamentally embodied nature of all experience. To say this is not to describe something that escapes culture. As David Howes has put it: 'The human sensorium … never exists in a natural state. Humans are social beings, and just as human nature is itself a product of culture, so is the human sensorium' (Howes 2005b: 3).

(2) The particular characteristics of visual texts and objects must be respected – their specific 'visuality' understood and analysed. This visuality, however, does not need to be construed as a strange 'opacity', refusing analysis. Nor does the discovery of certain unassimilated sections of a painting. Keith Moxey has made one of the most persuasive cases for this, with regard to some of Brueghel's paintings (Moxey 2009). The analysis of the works is subtle and compelling, and the moment of fracture nicely described. And yet I remain unpersuaded that the failures of the 'reality effect' (the result of unassimilated moments) and the incomplete project of ekphrasis (the ability to

describe the scene fully) commit us to a notion of 'presence' or unmediated experience (see also Moxey 2008).

(3) Images (and objects) often have a 'power' in personal and social life, which means they are deferred to, they are prized, abhorred, feared and so on. This power is culturally, or personally, accorded to them – it does not inhere in them. As Hilary Mantel has put it, writing about a 'charmed' bracelet she once owned, 'when we are in a situation of threat ... it's natural, if irrational, to use some object to polarise our fears ... we endow the object with the power that's really our own' (Mantel 2009: 25).

(4) The objects we interact with in everyday life are not simply inert, passive, background things; they have meanings, histories, an active role in social encounters. This does not mean they are animated, or have intentions.

(5) In twenty-first-century Western culture, the advances of technology, medical science and information sciences have brought radical modifications of what humans can do, often in close association with these technologies. The boundary between human and non-human is not confused or blurred as a result of this.

(6) Cultural studies, art history, anthropology and sociology must take account of the affective and emotive aspects of everyday life – something ignored by critical theory until recently. We have no reason to assume that affect is in some sense 'pure' (separate from/prior to our lifetime experience, or the context of its effect), or that it cannot in principle be captured and described by both subject and observer.

I suppose we could add to this:

(7) Brain scans may reveal physiological counterparts to processes of feeling and thinking.

The point is that none of this mandates a sociological or anthropological method privileging – or even featuring – non-discursive strategies to deal with elusive, pre-signifying events. (Pre-conscious perhaps – but that is what psychoanalysis is for.) The experiential sense of an unmediated encounter with (for instance) a painting does not mean *either* that the encounter *is* unmediated (simply that the subject is unaware of what is at work) *or* that the observer/ethnographer cannot mobilise analytic-discursive strategies to try to address the phenomenon. The fact that we cannot easily find words for an experience (including an emotional one) does not mean that it cannot be put into words – or even that it is not already informed by our (fundamentally linguistic) being. (I leave entirely out of this case discussions of 'bare life' or 'creaturely life', proposed by Giorgio Agamben, Eric Santner and others, noting only that a commitment to such notions would certainly mount a different objection to my line of argument – and also that I would probably feel compelled to figure out my own objection to these accounts.)

Visual studies, sensory anthropology and new theories of affect have without doubt changed the way in which we study cultures (and culture). In many ways, it remains quite difficult to see exactly how we can go about the job – for instance, understanding the connection between affective and interpretative relationships to an object or a cultural text. My argument throughout has been that we need not be terrorised, or seduced, into conversations about such mysterious things as 'presence'

or immediacy or speaking pictures or animated objects, or into a premature and mistaken abandonment of critical theory. If, as Norman Bryson has suggested, theory has been impoverished by its containment in what he calls 'an essentially *clerical* outlook that centers on the written text', at the expense of feeling, emotion and sensation (Bryson 2003: 4), the solution seems to me to be to continue working on that theory, not to give up on it. To conclude with a suggestion of what this means, and coming back to the question of the power of images, I turn to Keith Moxey's thoughtful exploration of the 'iconic turn' in visual studies (Moxey 2008). He sets out the 'new fascination with the object', characterising the work of art historians in Germany, France and the United States:

> Bored with the 'linguistic turn' and the idea that experience is mediated through the medium of language, many scholars are now convinced that we may sometimes have unmediated access to the world around us, that the subject/object distinction, so long a hallmark of the epistemological enterprise, is no longer valid. In the rush to make sense of the circumstances in which we find ourselves, our tendency in the past was to ignore and forget 'presence' in favour of 'meaning'.... Works of art are objects now regarded as more appropriately encountered than interpreted. (Moxey 2008: 131–132)

Reviewing the arguments for presence, the power of objects and the encounter with the work which is not mediated by language, he takes seriously the arguments of Gumbrecht, Elkins, Mitchell and Didi-Huberman, as well as introducing to Anglophone art history the contributions to this debate of Gottfried Boehm, Hans Belting and Horst Bredekamp, all of whom propose a view of visual objects which 'cannot be reduced to codes and signifying systems' (Moxey 2008: 138). He goes on to contrast this work on the iconic presence of images with the interpretative model of visual studies, and concludes that in fact the two approaches are compatible, each needing to be supplemented by the other. Crucially, this is possible because the supposed power of images is in fact (as I have argued above) power we have given them.

> Different though they appear to be, the ontological and semiotic perspectives on visual objects may in fact be reconcilable. The ways in which objects call to us, their animation, their apparent autonomy, stem only from their association with us. To insist on their 'secondary' agency is a means of recognising not only their independence but also their dependence on human culture. They may haunt us but their autonomy is relative. They cannot exist without the power with which we invest them. (Moxey 2008: 142)

So for Moxey, the iconic turn – the emphasis on the actuality and visuality of the text – is valuable because it insists that we pay attention to how the text works. This means, for example, 'analyses of media and form that add richness and texture to established forms of interpretation' (142). One could say that the risks of reductionism which accompany hermeneutic models are avoided by the insistence on (visual) textuality here.

And yet this is not quite enough for the case we need to make in response to theories of presence. The authors Moxey reviews surely mean a great deal more than

that one should pay attention to formal qualities of a painting. There is often (though not always) an ontological dimension to the argument for presence (as we saw earlier in the case of Gumbrecht). In general, there is a clear investment in the notion of unmediated, pre- or non-symbolic experience. In treating respectfully discussions of 'unmediated experience' and the 'animated status of images', Moxey necessarily takes on the task of either accepting these terms or rejecting them. The fact that visual texts have (as of course they do) very specific characteristics, which cannot be confined by interpretations, but which participate in evoking responses from viewers, is a rather weak version of the argument for presence. My own inclination is to take even further this dismantling of the new mysticism which increasingly seems to characterise work in cultural studies – to challenge head on the belief in elements of culture or cultural experience which escape language and thereby resist sociocultural analysis.

It does not exactly sum up the points I have tried to make here, but I end with a quotation from an essay by E. H. Gombrich, first published in 1972. Acknowledging the power of the visual image to arouse emotions, he points out how limited this is in the absence of knowledge and context:

> We should never be tempted to forget ... that ... context must be supported by prior expectations based on tradition. Where these links break, communication also breaks down. Some years ago there was a story in the papers to the effect that riots had broken out in an underdeveloped country because of rumours that human flesh was being sold in a store. The rumour was traced to food cans with a grinning boy on the label. Here it was a switch of context that caused the confusion. As a rule the picture of fruit, vegetable or meat on a food container does indicate its contents; if we do not draw the conclusion that the same applies to a picture of a human being on the container, it is because we rule out the possibility from the start. (Gombrich 1982: 142–143)

Note

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